



# THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION  
DEVOTED TO BORDER HISTORY

*Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.*

No. 40.

Price, Five Cents.



"HANG HIM, AND IT WILL BE YOUR TURN NEXT!" ROARED BUFFALO BILL.





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No. 40.

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Price Five Cents.

## Buffalo Bill and the Prairie Wolves;

OR,

## HUNTING THE BANDITS OF BONEYARD GULCH.

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By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

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### CHAPTER I. MAKING AN ENEMY.

"Down on your knees and apologize to this young lady, or the sun shines through you!"

This order was backed by a large revolver in the fist of Buffalo Bill.

The man so menaced looked but once, and his knee joints relaxed.

As he was obeying, the young girl who was the cause of the altercation, clasping her little white hands, stared with surprise to be the center of this sudden and terrible scene.

To Miss Minnie Mountrose the street of Goldeena was as odd as one of Japan. With its blue or red flannel shirted miners—for it was in the Black Hills diggings and washings—its few Chinamen, an Indian or two, blanketed and plumed, and the gamblers in broadcloth, the finest of linen and the brightest of

diamonds, it was thrilling to her, fresh from the East.

She had come out of the Goldeena House, where her father was recruiting after the stage coach journey from Sidney, on the North Platte, to see the town.

Separated mysteriously from her French maid, her attendant, and bewildered by being about the only one of her sex in the motley and noisy crowd, she was suddenly accosted by one whom she had known briefly in the Eastern cities.

This was he who cowered under the frontiersman's gun.

Baron Chillturn, as he had styled himself while pretending to be an English nobleman, had vanished when his swindle was unmasked. He must have followed her, though, when her father came West to speculate with his capital in Black Hills mines.



He had been assured by a correspondent in whom he believed reliance could be placed to any amount, but who was in collusion with Chillturn, that tin had been found in the place, and some Welsh miners, familiar with the way to work it, were on the spot to develop it.

How else would the British baron have appeared in her path and taken advantage of their being face to face to repeat his odious offering of a love which she would have spurned, even if she had still believed him a peer.

She had no time to more than rebuke him, for, prompt as the eagle to swoop, one of the bystanders had struck him and literally brought the cowardly insulter to her feet.

"I—I am not a stranger to the lady," stammered the latter, with a face more red with baffled spite and rage than pallid with fear; "I—I am sorry I have made a mistake. I humbly apologize to her——"

"Oh, I do not want your excuses," said William Cody, haughtily. "It is a good thing for you that you did not get worse."

And by the frown on his handsome face the hearers knew that he was speaking the truth.

"Lave-ho!" said the famous hunter, then seeing that the tenderfoot did not understand the old mountaineer's cry to rise, he added in the same tone of careless contempt, "Git up and dust; you are, in spite of your headlight pin and fine ruffles, but a low-down cur. And no muttering, or I may be goaded into mopping the gutter with you."

Baron Chillturn slowly rose, flushed with shame, for the bystanders did not spare their laughter. He darted a baleful glance on the borderman and on the girl, and his lips muttered a threat including both.

"Swallow your venom, or I shall hurry you on!" said Bill.

He seemed to regret that he was letting off this genteel ruffian so lightly. But a light hand was laid on his arm.

It was Miss Mountrose.

"Please do not make any more of this. He is sufficiently punished."

"Not to my measurement, but—he has gone. Never mind, little girl——"

A young lady of eighteen was a girl in Bill's eyes.

"If ever he hovers around you again you mention Buffalo Bill as wanting to see him, and continue this conversation."

Then seeing that the pretty lips were framing a phrase of thanks, which he detested for an act of natural gallantry, he hastened away. He was glad to spy an acquaintance in a saloon doorway.

"You will have to excuse me, miss," he said, hurriedly, in his voice, so gentle when addressing women. "My friends wait. Oh, no thanks, please."

And making a sweeping bow with his sombrero, he mingled with the departing crowd.

The lady was joined by her maid, who began her apologies for having been lured into parting company with a nimble tongue, but with a false glance.

Minnie saw through her by this episode. She cut her apologies short with a sharp, "That will do! Follow me to the hotel!" and as the mixed assemblage made way with the double respect for one so beauteous and good, and for whom the King of the Plains had intervened, she briskly returned to the house which she ought not to have quitted under treacherous guard.

In the meantime the wretch who had been chastised for his insolence had shrunk into the first doorway.

A man was standing in this doorway.

It was the place known among this medley of pine shanties and portable frame houses as the Dobie House, because made of sun-baked bricks.

It was a gambling and drinking den of the worst species. Its rival was the Robbers' Roost, the flaunting tent half way down the same block nearer the center of the town. In the Dobie they robbed the customers; in the Roost they murdered them, too.

These two men looked hard at each other.

The Englishman looked younger than his thirty years, for he was fair, and his light hair was rather golden than auburn. His mustache was heavy and well kept. His blue eyes showed cunning. His nose was too sharp, and, with his bold glance, now he had recovered from the humiliation, he reminded one of the bird of prey. He could fascinate as well as overawe. He wore an English traveling suit of tweed, with gloves of tan, and fine leather boots. In spite of this attire he seemed fit for athletic feats.

The more the other studied him the deeper he was surprised that he had submitted to the correction.

And yet "Fly Frank, the Gambolier Sharp," would himself have yielded when the antagonist had "the drop on him."



On his side the pretended baron regarded the gaming expert closely.

He saw a slender, alert, graceful man, rather showy than solid; evidently powerful, though nicely proportioned. A prize fighter would not have cared to grapple with him, for it would be like an elephant fighting a tiger.

Neither may win, but both die of death wounds.

He was attired in black of the best quality. He glittered with diamonds, the real thing, with a sort of taunt among his villainous associates of "Take if you dare!" Ah, nobody felt like tackling Fly Frank for a jewel or two. He was the quickest man with the knife, Mexicans not barred, in Goldeena.

"Come to size you, sir," said Frank, all of a sudden, as the other seemed to dilate to his right dimensions under the searching gaze, "it licks me how you let Buffler Bill tread you down in the dirt, as a fellow might say. I suppose it was because you were not well heeled. Well, there is sound hoss-sense in that. It is not a mossel of use carrying pistols unless you are lightning to use them as these Injin-fighters, like Buffler, and his pal, Texas Jack yonder, to say nothing of our Marshal Wild Bill, who is eying us suspicious from over there. They do not drink much, they fight shy of professionals at throwing the bones or fumbling the pasteboards, but they can shoot some."

The Englishman said nothing, but in his eyes, as he turned them to where his late punisher was talking with his friends and the high constable of the town, was an excess of hate which made Frank hot all over.

"I see. I have not mistaken you. Well, you are a rarity to take that sass from any man and bide your time to sarve it back scorching. Say, mister, were you ever in Sain' Loo?"

"Saint Louis? Perhaps. Why do you ask?"

"'Cause I thought you might want to buy the bowie knife I offered you there in Bartlemy's Gilded Parlor, in '82."

"Eh?"

"Just what I am saying. I am the broken sport whom you lent a cool thousand to when you was asked, on the pledge of a fancy toothpick, inlaid with gold and dotted with rubies—it was a keepsake of mine, and I would not lose it for anything. Here, do you remember it, though not me?"

The British baron glanced at the magnificent dagger knife which the gambler showed, and nodded.

"I recall you now," he said. "I wish you had slipped that into my hand a minute ago."

"For what good? Buffler would have pistoled you straight. Besides, you and I could not have run the town, for he is among mates here—I mean in the village—with Wild Bill the Marshal, and Texas Jack just come to town."

"I still wish you would lend me your arms."

The two villains exchanged a bright look. They understood each other.

"Come in. Out in the open is not healthy," said Frank.

And he pulled the stranger, not reluctant or frightened now, within the gaming house, not in full blast this early hour.

Frank drew his old acquaintance into a corner farthest from the street.

"Friend," began Frank, in a low voice, "you staked me when I was pumped out among them Mississip' sports, and I am just yourn body, boots and soul, see! I am pooty well tired of these mountain men, and these plainsmen spoiling the fun in the towns. Why don't they stick to shooting Injin and buffler and antelopes—and leave gents to the gentleman's games? Fust thing they know, they will be cleaned out, and think themselves lucky to have the prairie dogs' holes to creep into."

"You are talking," said the Englishman, "as though you had a couple of hundred men at your back."

The gambler darted a quick glance all around, even at the brick wall where they stood, and suspicious as a catamount, he suddenly drew the long-bladed knife which he had shown to his companion.

Reaching out, he darted the steel-armed hand, lithe and taper as a lady's, in at a crevice in this wall.

"Ouch—guard me, oh, God!" whined a voice in Spanish on the other side.

They both heard the retreating steps of some man.

"That was a spy," remarked the gambler, calmly, as he withdrew the knife and looked at the reddened point. "Luke," he added to the bartender, who roused up from behind the counter at this cry of pain, "you are letting your customers git crowded. Send a man round to see who sneaks up to listen in your corral."

Two of the servants sallied out to search the premises for the wounded eavesdropper.

"To resume," went on the gambler, unruffled.



"You are right. I have got at least a hundred, who are worth the average five hundred when properly handled."

"Then you are——"

"Just a sporting gent here, but a little out yonder on the high land they call me the King Bird of the Buzzards."

"The Buzzards of the Boneyard?" said the other, turning more pale than he did when under Buffalo Bill's revolver. He had the name correct.

He need not have been in Goldeena long to know the reputation of the bandits, of whom Fly Frank proudly proclaimed himself the captain. The Boneyard was the name given to the gulch to the south-east of the town. An abandoned surface working where a Wajaja Indian first discovered gold in the '60's, and showed the Shining Stone to Nelson the Squawman—so many dead bodies were seen bleaching in its dark bottom that it was shunned by all.

At first, perhaps, these grim piles were believed to be the remains of men and mules, who had misstepped on the old road called Dead Mule Trail, along the mountain side. But soon, as the ruffians flourished in the saloons and showed trophies remembered as belonging to missing miners, the whisper ran that they were the corpses of the murdered.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE POISONED BLADE.

Well might Baron Chillturn shiver at the mention of the Boneyard and this new friend's avowal that he was the master of the villains who carpeted its hollow with the ghastly relics, unrecoverable from such depths.

Frank smiled with glee. He judged that his hearer would not be so impressed by a common horror.

"Good!" said the Englishman, overcoming a disgust which, after all, would be out of place; "I think—as I have plenty of dollars and so only need your help—we shall strike a bargain."

"You have only to lead—I will follow on. I do not want your gold. I will aid you to my level best for the hatred I bear Buffer Bill and his companions of the Plains and Sierras. Do you know, they have talked about our jig being up, and that they were twisting the ropes for us."

In spite of his nerve, Chillturn felt a cold shudder run round his neck.

"Wild Bill said that he was only waiting for the call of his friends. But decking the telegraph posts with live men is a game two can play at. I bet that my Buzzards can git the pull over them honest galoots in a tug of war."

They went to the bar together like brothers. A little more and they would have drunk out of the same glass. Before they had emptied a bottle they were concocting a scheme to be revenged upon their mutual foes, all the honest men who blocked their way to running the town on their own lines.

"Mark this," said the Englishman, gravely. "Mr. Mountrose is enormously wealthy. He can be held to ransom among the five figures in dollars, and I have a little scheme to lower the tide of his golden flood, which I will describe to you hereafter. And another thing I want to lower—that is, his daughter's pride. I offered her my hand once, and she refused me. So she shall yet go down on her knees and beg to me, more abjectly than I was made to do to her. That was my weak moment such as all have once in a life. I shall weaken no more. Then, there is another thing."

He lowered his voice, and continued in the other's ear:

"You waste your time picking off these gold-scrappers one by one. Why not wait till the Deadwood coach has all the month's clean-up aboard and swipe in the entire lot?"

"A good idee," exclaimed the King Bird of the Buzzards, with his eyes sparkling.

"It is simply to waylay it on the road; I noticed plenty of good ambushes along the road hither; and, though I do not pretend to the woodcraft of Texas Jack, with whom I hunted and camped down South, I am not a fool when turned loose on the plains for all that. No more nibbling at the outer edge—let us bite deep. In one swoop we may gather in the gold for the Omaha Bank, the girl and her father——"

"It is a go," cried Frank, delighted. "But first——"

"First of all, our revenge on these self-appointed regulators of our morals, and on the whole town that grinned at my being bulldozed into excusing myself to that girl."

"On the whole town? Is not that a large order?" questioned the fly one, aghast at the other's audacity.



"I would fire it from end to end if I have to run through it with the torch in my own hand."

"Bravo! that is the talk! You are fit to be my lieutenant."

And the bandit leader, melted by the liquor, clapped the Englishman on the back.

"Your lieutenant, old man," cried the other, as if proudly, but under his breath he muttered, as they clinked glasses:

"Waiting to be your chief."

"Hear me! here is confusion to Marshal Wild Bill and all the other Bills who oppose the lovers of fun! as for the Jacks, we shall turn them down."

While these two worthies were plotting arson and murder, to say nothing of kidnaping and highway robbery, the objects of their scheme were talking about them.

"Where did he drop into?"

"That varmint?" queried Texas Jack, looking round from where the three bordermen stood, whom a sculptor would admiringly have chosen for the Three Graces of Western manhood. "Skulked into some congenial hole, I reckon."

"He got into tow with the Gambolier, Fly Frank," answered the Marshal of Goldeena. "Birds of a feather, you know."

"Ay; they may hang together in the strongest sense of the word," remarked Bill Cody. "I ought not to have let him go so free. If we let these scall-wags hook decent folks in such fashion, we should have no one coming out to the West."

They were interrupted by a man who ran up to them eagerly.

He had a swarthy complexion, and he was a New Mexican—Marcial, by name.

He had half his face swathed in a fresh bandage, and he was in pain, but his eyes had not lost luster.

"What is the matter, Mart?" questioned Wild Bill.

"Hear the report first," gasped Marcial, with an effort. "The man from the East whom Buffalo Bill made knock under is taken up into the arms of Fly Frank—and do you know what I have heard? Frank boasts that he is the captain of the Buzzards of the Boneyard. He and the Englishman are now leagued, and they are going to fire the town."

"You mean this? Why, all we were waiting for was to learn who was the head of the scoundrels' ring," said Wild Will, hastily, and his hand ran straight to his shooters in his belt.

"I mean it," said Marcial—then, suddenly: "The Virgin show grace to a sinner! they have nailed me. Oh, how that slash burns! Ah, it was not an ordinary cut——"

With a yell extorted by fierce pain, he tore the linen from his face. A knife had cleft the cheek and injured the left eye. It was no common wound, and terribly inflamed.

"The miscreant!" continued he. "The steel was poisoned. I am a dead man—avenge me."

As he reeled and fell, his companion on many a trail along the Pecos caught him in his arms. All these veterans in wounds looked with apprehension on this gash, fiery red, with the swollen and turgid veins running to it empurpled.

"I was spying them in the adobe house, when Frank darted his sticker in through a crack. He fetched me. I made light of the cut. I returned to the listening place, when I ought to have washed the gash. But I heard the plot. Yes, they are going to burn the town and take revenge on Buffalo Bill. Be ahead of them—remember Marcial, who was ever an American, though some sneered at him as a Greaser, and get the first blow in."

Texas Jack had lowered the speaker's head on his bent knee, but already the muscles of the neck were shaken by spasms, more short and severe at each attack. Rolling his great black eyes, the New Mexican died at the feet of his friends.

"Revenge?" repeated Texas Jack, flinging down his hat and kneeling by the body. "He's gone up—that soul of his was white, boys. He dragged me across the Frio, in the inundation, on a raft of cane when the Navajoes were hotfoot at our heels."

"Fire the town?" mused Wild Bill, full of pride at having the safety of the settlement under his care.

"He bid us strike quick!" So said Texas Jack.

He and Wild Bill took a forward step toward the Dobie House, but with a hand on one shoulder of each, Buffalo Bill detained them.

"Hold on—play cautious," said he. "This Frank is no slouch. He is not there now, waiting to be picked off. He who uses poison knives is treacherous as a wolf. Let us not be hasty lest we give him and his gang the hint to scoot. What I want is the whole lot in the net. All their necks wrung by the same noose would not repay the community the loss of one true man like this."

And he bowed to the remains of Marcial, whom,



at a gesture from the marshal, two of his posse removed to the sheriff's office.

"Let us spend the night in gathering evidence and marking down the Buzzards. Then, in the morning, we will sound the alarm-bell and lug the entire collection of the Rogues' Gallery of Goldeena before the justice. On the cold heart of Marcial, the murdered, I swear that they shall have justice meted out to them."

Any sympathizer with the robbers who heard this threat, spoken with calm decision, must have sneaked away with fear that the Buzzards would croak joyously never again.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE BAD OMEN.

It was midnight.

The drink and gaming-saloons were in full blast.

Texas Jack and Wild Bill were receiving the reports of agents who had gone the rounds to order the members of the Good Citizens' League to be ready for rough work in the morning. Cody was making a tour to see if the Buzzards were on the alert.

But never were the streets—Goldeena had three, the Main and two parallel—more deserted and quiet.

Only a couple of men with the watering cart were going up and down the back street, sprinkling the heavy dust of the dirty roads, which made life a burden when the wind threw it up in whirls. But if the watchers had been less intent on seeing if the rovers of the worse sort were up to mischief, they might have noticed the queer antics of these scavengers. Besides, instead of being the low-type Huns who usually slaved in the night amid the refuse, the cart-men were white men, merely disguised in soiled rags. And had one forgotten to hold the nose in approaching the cart, they would be surprised to inhale, not the reek of decayed vegetables, but the unmistakable smell of coarse kerosene.

At certain places, too, where a house was so hushed that one might be sure the inmates were reposing, these men, instead of taking away anything, left a bucket of the oil.

In short, the Buzzards, acting on the fiendish suggestion of the British baron, zealous like all new hands to show his mettle, were scattering the inflammables about the hurrah-town. Pine plank and canvas would scarcely need this anointing to kindle at a touch of fire.

Convinced that Marcial had heard wrong, or that the bandits shrank from assailing a place so well guarded, Marshal Bill and his friends came from the miners' supply store, which was the headquarters of the Regulators.

"My impression is that they have taken to flight," said Wild Bill, listening, without catching one alarming sound on the cool night air.

"Good!" cried Jack. "But here's for the finish. I have some dust in my pouch—I will buck the tiger for a clean-up."

"I am not playing cards any more," said Buffalo Bill.

"Still, me and Bill will look in upon you later on, if only to bring you a run of luck," said Wild Bill.

Jack went on to the Robbers' Roost, while the others returned to the store.

Meanwhile the men with the explosive oil had discharged their errand and their cargo.

"This village was too previous," muttered one, whom those who knew would have recognized as Fly Frank, who had put his own shoulder to the wheel. "It is time it went up, like Elisha's car. All fixed, boyees. Git out lively after touching off the fireworks, and come back with the band, ready to sail in and take advantage of the uproar to pillage."

His men nodded, and he walked on, a little in doubt what to do with himself. Then, throwing off the rags, he showed that he wore a suit of velveteen and furs, such as the Scotch Canadians sport in the Northwest, and sometimes startle the natives with below their border. He donned a pair of red side whiskers and a sandy mustache, and being able to patter broken English with a French-Canadian accent, he expected to palm himself off as a stranger.

It was hazardous, for he was going right into the Robbers' Roost, where he was a nightly patron.

"Nothing venture, nothing win," he muttered, not without misgiving. "That new pard of mine is to meet me there. I am much off the track if he does not turn out a very fiend incarnate. What nerve to stand that set-down from Buffler William! It makes my blood boil to think of it—I would eat the heart of the galoot that downed me like that."

He looked round, but on the sky was not the least red glimmer, so that he might rely on it that his men had not untimely set the torch to the doomed buildings. He then entered the gambling saloon.

Two lusty fellows at the door eyed him sharply—



they were not the usual guards. Wild Bill had replaced them by followers of his own. But the disguised gambler was not to be identified in his change of countenance.

"Let the sucker pass," muttered one. "This is the last grab game these fakirs will play."

Frank looked round like a stranger, but any one could tell that he was not bewildered, or interested in the motley throng.

Men of all nations jostled one another to get near the tables, where different games went on with but one identical feature; they won in the long run against all players.

Most of the notorious criminals, the men with a record for crime were absent. The rumor that the Goldeenians were going to kick had fittted about.

Fly Frank was set back by this. But after a while he remarked a peculiar movement which escaped the others. Now and then a man who came up to the board to lose a little pile, drew back with an expression of displeasure, and as if trying to find his way out by the back entrance into the corral behind, disappeared up a low flight of steps.

Frank recognized these men as adherents, or, at least, those who had winked at the carryings-on of his fellows.

He knew, too, that by this exit any one could go up to the one story above the saloon.

"It is a meeting," he thought. "It has been arranged by this English deep one. He said that he would not want for helping hands. But where has he stowed himself?"

Not among the customers of the green cloth, or the bar. Nobody like Chillturn was seen. But after a time, having stared everywhere else, the gambler perceived that old Schwearin, the saloon-keeper, had re-enforced himself for the night hours with a young man of his nationality.

At least, this stranger wore a bland face, a shaggy yellow mustache, thick and heavy, and his light eyes seemed sky color in the crossing rays of the dozen oil lamps illuminating the El Dorado, as Peter Schwearin called his den. He had the German's silent tongue, too, but he served mixed drinks—all from the same cask of whisky—with the dexterity of the champion bartender of a leading hotel.

"That's my man or he's not here," thought Frank.

He was not left to doubt, for on his going up to

the bar for a drink, the suspected one, in handing him the decanter for him to take a gentleman's drink according to his delicacy, touched his fingers after the manner he had taught Chillturn to use at need.

"Yes," thought the King Bird of the Buzzards, "he is a sight more cute than I bargain for. He will do."

He was confirmed in this opinion by now noticing that those who went out of the saloon by the other door exchanged a glance with the false bartender. The latter, with a wary toss of the head, indicated the upstairs room where were assembling no doubt the recruits he had so soon engaged.

Still further, to assure Frank that he was in full touch with him, the masquerading Briton made a sign that he was to wait and not play cards.

Not play? a gambler not play, while the board was wallowing in gold?

It had its irresistible fascination to Frank. He gradually sided up to the principal table where the game was being run. The next thing he knew he was playing.

It was a game of red and black; a simple layout which enthralled the miners. Frank was only killing time, but his fever grew when he discovered that he was losing hand-over-fist, as a sailor, drifted from San Francisco, rudely blurted out. And that, in the same degree, one of the players was raking in the spoil.

It was Texas Jack. He was killing time also, waiting for his friends to appear.

Reckless and cool, the hero of the Rio Grande and the Staked Plains offered a direct contrast to the disguised gamester. Fly Frank did not understand this game, at which presided new faces. With the noise that the Buzzards were threatened, the gambling fraternity had taken wing. Those who remained were unknown to Frank, and they seemed to his excited fancy in a plot to break him.

Heated by his drinks, and nervous about the incendiary scheme, Frank staked on the colors at random. Every time he lost.

And Texas Jack won.

The bystanders laughed at the supposed Canuck when it was evident that he had come down to his last dollars. He had to scrape and rake in the corners of his secret pockets to get a last stake.

This went the way of the others. But again, at the



same time, Texas Jack, smiling quietly in a way most provoking, took his winnings off his opposing color.

Frank turned partly away, but a laugh of derision at his defeat checked him. It also made him blind to the certain sign from the pretended bartender that he was to play no more.

He fished up from a pouch in his hip a chamois leather bag, and triumphantly poured from it a quantity of pure gold in spangles, large scales, and grains.

Chillturn, leaning over the bar, as much attracted as the rest at this kind of duel between Texas Jack and the false Canadian, looked aghast. This bag of dust was stolen from him—his new partner had picked his pocket while vowing good fellowship! Who should be trusted since murderers and pillagers deceive their pals?

But this was not all—the loss of the gold he could overlook, considering the King Bird of the Buzzards offered alliance.

The bag contained more than gold.

For the stuff, the sallow cashier gave three sums in coin. Two of them were lost when, suddenly, Texas Jack, who had been looking at the leather pouch in a more and more enwrapped manner, thrust out his hand.

It was not so much to grasp it as to shield it from another hand, even the player's, as he cried:

"You purport to hail from the Nor'west, sir? Don't ye? Then tell me how come you to pour out the dust so free from this bag? Look at the stamp on it all, gents."

And on the yellow lining, stamped in black, appeared the label in a circle:

"First National (Houston) Bank of Taos."

"Well?" exclaimed several bystanders, suspecting some revelation of deadly import, since the Canadian turned pale.

"Three months ago," said Texas Jack, "this bag was the property of an English nobleman, Baron Chillturn, whose guide I was to the Giant Canons of the Colorado. Speak, how did this fall into your trembling hands?"

Frank was, indeed, in a tremor. How could he confess that he had stolen it from the man who no doubt owned it legitimately, but who, as his confederate and foisting himself on this honorable crowd as the bartender from Germany, would—if willing to

own up—be taken as a liar of his own stripe, desirous to whitewash him.

"I expect you slew him?" continued Jack.

No answer.

"Where else did you get it?"

"Well, silence gives consent. We are making a haul of your sort, and I propose to begin with you."

Jack's hand rose from the bag, and was thrust toward the gambler's shoulder.

"What do you interfere with me for?" he faltered, looking over to the bar for a hint on his course, and at the same time more than ever wishing he could hear the alarm of fire.

"I arrest you on suspicion——"

The hand closed on the mock Canuck's shoulder, and he felt the bone ache in the clutch which had choked a panther before now.

He was giving himself up for lost, when, his eyes rolling upward after having vainly appealed to Chillturn, he perceived in an opening in the ceiling several faces, not a bit strange, and muzzles of steel to support their threatening expression.

He had forgotten that the Buzzard's allies engaged by Baron Chillturn, had been collecting over the heads of the players.

Grinning with revived hope, he turned sharp round upon Texas Jack.

"Suspicion nothing," he yelled, shaking off the grip with energy, though the fingers still retained a fragment of the cloth and one of the whiskers.

"Fly Frank. The Buzzard King Bird," so rose the cry of those who recognized him as the borrowed feathers were plucked.

"Yes, and I am the owner of that purse," shouted the bartender.

With a powerful spring he leaped over the bar, smashing a tray of tumblers.

"It is Chillturn—my British lord," exclaimed Texas Jack, drawing his pistol like an alarm hammer striking; "I thought so. Hyar, you are my mark. Old scores to settle before running up new ones."

But the Englishman did not heed this challenge.

Landing lightly for his stoutness, and dextrously by the two principals in this scene, he put a pistol in the hand of Frank, and, cocking its mate, he added in a roar, which was audible throughout the shanty above and below:

"Lights out, lights out, that we may see the fire!"

At this signal, before the gambler could take aim,



several shots rang out. The lamps aimed at by the concealed desperadoes above were extinguished. Their smoke and that of the guns commingled.

Chillturn had already shot out two of the lamps when his companion was just recovering from his stupor at this turning of the tables.

Not one by one, but by groups, the lights were thus put out. The horrified and startled mob gazed at the last one or two, and as they suffered the fate of the rest, fell away from the center where Texas Jack was trying to get a shot at Frank and his friend.

Some tumbled toward the door, some to the rear, but here the stairs were cumbered by the men who had begun the shooting. They rushed down to the call from Chillturn:

"Buzzards, on deck!"

The shooting grew hotter, but as all the lights were out, the bullets flew about after the light in men's bodies.

Texas Jack, in the flashes of the powder, reached out with the left hand for the shadow which he imagined to be Chillturn. But all he grabbed was the false blond mustache.

Chillturn and Frank had clasped hands in the darkness, and were rallying their followers by their secret grips and calls.

They soon presented a compact, well armed front, to the mob, frightened and dazed, who prevented Texas Jack from doing anything against them.

But in the height of the riot, a new turn was given to the commotion.

They had complained of the want of light.

They would have more than they wanted.

A flaming wad from a carbine fell upon a pool of oil from a broken lamp. In an instant it flared, the flame spread, and all the players were involved in a sheet of radiance.

But as they moved with one impulse to the street doorway, a vast red glare made them stand.

In this glare they saw two stalwart figures running toward the center of the town.

Two vigorous voices alternated with each other, shouting:

"Rouse, rouse! the robbers have fired the town."

The men were Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE FIRE-FIGHTERS.

"Here, I have them!" roared Texas Jack, like a wounded lion, as he recognized in the alarmists his brothers of the rifle and bowie.

In another second, afraid of being burned, Buzzards, wounded and scorched, players, strangers, all were hurled into the street by an explosion. The fire had penetrated the dugout which Pete Schwearin styled his wine vaults, and ignited a barrel of spirits.

Usually a fire in such a town of cloth and plank is difficult to cope with. But when the frail habitations were saturated with rock oil, salvation was impossible.

Over Goldeena more red flare than smoke was rising, and the stars paled their silver. Around and about the burning houses, demons were rushing, leaping up into the shattered windows and emerging by the broken out gaps above, with arms full of plunder. They yelled like drunken Indians, and flourished reddened knives and smoking firearms.

The Buzzards and the additions whom Chillturn had found for their ranks were holding revelry.

In their natural desire to save their property, the citizens at the first disobeyed the summons of the marshal.

Thus the two Bills and Texas Jack were almost alone to abide the onset of the wretches who had rushed out of the Dutchman's saloon.

But in the open, having torn their coats off and bared their arms for the fight, they breasted the human breakers with their old and undying vim.

The Buzzards recoiled. They had lost seventeen killed and others wounded, had been hurled into the sparkling and spirit-sparting ruins of El Dorado Hall.

Commonly a high wind comes off the high land every night, and is so cold as to make a fire desirable—that is, in the chimney place. This time, to increase the woes, the blast was bitter as out of the mouth of Jack Frost himself.

Many of the citizens were hurriedly clothed when roused by the outcries of Buffalo Bill and their marshal.

The straggling lines of hovels and huts were half consumed, and the rest seemed doomed.

Alone, the Dobie House resisted the conflagration, a lesson that the old Spaniards knew a wrinkle about building.



Its next neighbor was the largest—the general store. It was also the League's main post. It contained extra arms and ammunition.

"Volunteers to save the powder," shouted Buffalo Bill.

"I am with you," said Wild Bill, simply. "Just wait till I tighten this rag."

He was seamed with a pistol ball across the chest, and was adjusting a bandage. He was grimed with charcoal and darkened with smoke. The excitement had enlarged his eyes, and he was now the lion in activity. The terrifying expression of his daunting eyes had made the banditti recoil and feel glad to be just on the edge of pistol range.

Thrilled by his bravery, three men, though tired and one wounded by a falling roof tree, joined the two bordermen.

The crowd looked on as the five vanished in the swirls of smoke enveloping the store.

The Buzzards for a space refrained from the long snapshots to learn the issue.

"What, backing out?" said Buffalo Bill, running up and standing in the open space where the Buzzard's bullets commanded none to cross. "Are you to stand by and let others save the supplies that should carry you through the winter?"

"But it is powder, Bill," said an old man, appealing with a gesture for him not to enter the circle of peril.

"Powder be blasted—I——"

A new spirit seized the citizens, and made the craven bold—the exhausted spirited. Man and boy, old and young, they set to work, and Buffalo Bill, who had seen many a border city go up like a cracker, led them intelligently.

The best shots and those who had ammunition were detailed to keep the Buzzards back, and, if possible, drive them out of the town.

All the others hunted for water and wet blankets, filled buckets and tried to stop the spread of the fire.

Already a great pile of the stores was placed on a bare lot of ground, and covered with blankets streaming with water; these provisions would be available.

Seeing the heap of saved stores rise into a mound, and the powder being brought out which might be soon used against him and his, Frank the Fly foamed at the mouth.

"If they save them, we are lost. If we destroy their eatables and the cartridges, they must abandon the camp town, and we can pick and choose for our home in the ridge. See?"

Yes, his scoundrels saw clearly. They nerved themselves for a charge. As for Chillturn, who had shot every charge off, he was drunken with bloodshed.

"I am coming along, Frank," he said. "Let us annihilate the pack. I feel my breath oppressed while

that braggart who humbled me struts among these half-baked cakes."

With a handkerchief tied round his head, with his eyes shining in their blackened sockets like a maniac's, and his shirt front smeared with gunpowder, he looked a Satan, and, more than their leader, he had kept the ruffians up to the front in their skirmishing with the citizens. On seeing him so wrapped in slaughter, these men had given him a new name.

"Britisher baron be dashed," the lieutenant, Tom Turmoil, had said, in an interval in the riot, "he is a boss bloodspiller, and don't you forget that."

The bloodspiller boss was at the height of popularity among these rovers. And when he supported the captain in his proposal for a conclusive raid they clustered about him.

With the command to rush, given by a whisper and a sign with the hands armed with pistol and knife, the brigands advanced through the smoke down the devastated street.

There was a lull. The fire-fighters were congratulating themselves on what they had snatched from destruction. They panted and stretched their limbs as they looked on the pile of salvage and had almost forgotten their assailants, particularly as the latter's dropping shots had ceased to pester them.

When the Buzzards made their rush, they had the surprised citizens at their mercy, and ten or fifteen dropped under lead and steel in a twinkling.

"They are rushing us," shouted Buffalo Bill. "Rally, rally, and breast them!" and he jumped forward while the rest were retreating and happening to meet Fly Frank face to face, as though he had singled him out, he stood the shot from his revolver full in the bosom. But he outstretched his tireless arm, and, catching the bandit by the neck, he hurled him to the ground, saying between his grating teeth:

"One of you snapped off, anyhow. Who is next?"

"I!" said Chillturn, leaping over the leader's rolling body, and dealing a thrust with a scythe blade which he had picked up after emptying his revolver from the mass of implements raked out of the store and strewing the street.

It was a deadly aim, and Buffalo Bill must have been pierced but for the chance of the battle hurling a young man between them. It was this unfortunate who was run through and fell, bleeding to death.

"That's Young Boston down," said Bill, firing a double-barreled pistol square into Chillturn without any impression. "What, is this devil owner of a charmed life?"

"Like yourself," returned the Boss Bloodspiller, glaring hate. "I wear armor."

And he laughed insultingly.

It was a fable from Buffalo Bill's narrow escapes, that he wore a secret jacket of steel plate.

"I, such a coward as you?" retorted the scout, exasperated.



He tore with a fevered hand the strips of burned linen and cloth off his breast.

"I am not a coyote cub."

"Mind my bite all the same," said the Englishman, chaffing at the hunter keeping him from following the bandits on their rush.

For Bill had taken up the first weapon handy, one of those iron-shod ox-goads such as the old farmers used to wield and the Mexicans still know, and with this he parried the other's substitute for a sword.

"Kill, kill!" yelled Chillturn, to the bandits, feeling that with their late captain dashed to earth by Buffalo Bill and kept down by feet trampling to and fro that he was the chief.

"I guess," interrupted Buffalo Bill, beginning to thrust with his short pike, after having warded off a couple of sweeping strokes, "I guess that I can supply you with all the killing you will want."

Their combat went on with the singular weapons with even more vigor and fury than all the other hand-to-hand conflicts combined.

In the steam, smoke and fumes of the petroleum, the fighters seemed imps in the place below. Imps struggling with human souls to hurl them into the furnaces.

For some time the grazing of metal upon metal was heard, disturbed only by a chance popping of firearms, which seemed but toys in the more savage and deadly clash of the rude swords and spears.

The fighters staggered on the dirt soaked with blood, and cumbered with the fallen. Oaths and groans were heard oftener than shouts and rallying cries. But such duels were too ferocious to be long maintained.

The bandits, infuriated by the loss of their chief and emboldened by success on the whole rewarding their audacity, returned from sweeping the street as far as the Goldeena House.

At the doors of that building, which the fire had spared, they had made prizes.

Several of the guests, standing there to see the conflagration and the affray, were dragged into their midst. Among them were included Miss Mountrose and her father, a gray-bearded, stout gentleman. Reared in the East, kept out of all street scuffles by his dignity, he had contemplated the fire and the riot with the amazement of a man dropped from a comet.

To him, these brave men repelling the ruffians were savages.

The bandits had not recognized the girl as the cause of their present commander being humiliated. They had snapped them up. To bandits they were born their prey.

But when Chillturn saw them return with these captives, he gave a shout of infernal happiness.

"Tom Turmoil, you are a full-jeweled 'hunter,' eighteen karats fine, and I am your best friend right

for'ard. Hold 'em tight. They are just what I have hungered for."

"Don't hustle for more till you can keep what you have got," said Bill, redoubling his attacks.

"You, the handful for me?" sneered the Britisher. "Lay on, boys—with this one laid low, the town is ours."

Buffalo Bill was in the center of a group of the bandits who had made a set on him, and were trying to crush him by numbers.

Then the others, obeying those who guarded the captives, and ordered them to help the new chief, added their forces to the few who had sustained Chillturn in his duel. They drove Wild Bill and his helpers to the wall of the store. There, backed to it, wielding their weapons with tired muscles, for they had been fighting the fire before coping with the villains, they lost hope. They seemed to see unavoidable death hovering over their drooping heads.

They warded and they hit out, with splintered clubs and pistols reversed to become billies, like machines. They had lost the alertness and spirit of men.

Suddenly, Marshal Bill dropped on one knee. It was not wholly to shun the stab of the scythe blade, but from sheer weakness in a tired muscle. The steel dug deep into the planks over his head, and for a minute held the bandit's hand, entangled with blood crusted on the handle, so that he and his opponent glared—their brows all but touching.

Maddened by disappointment and at appearing to weaken, Bill groped with one hand—the other was helpless—for a weapon knocked out of a dying hand on the dented soil.

"Now, I have got you!" screamed the Englishman, with a laugh following, full of mean delight.

"I'll see you hung yet, first," hissed Wild Bill, meeting his gaze unflinching and trying to rise.

Chillturn had plucked the stuck blade free. The point was turned, and, with a smack of it on a stone, he straightened it, such was his coolness.

"Now, sir—you die."

"Heaven forfend that I should die thus," muttered the marshal, who saw the steel point approach, unerring and relentless as fate.

"Hold!"

It was the voice, clear again from the excess of emotion, of Buffalo Bill.

All eyes, even to the vindictive pair of Chillturn, moved in the direction of the sound.

The scene was startling. At first glance, you would have said that at last Goldeena was in the grip of the bandits. For in one group they held the captives from the hotel, in another they half surrounded poor Marshal Bill, while yet another engirt Buffalo Bill, at whose feet lay Fly Frank, ready with his poisoned knife to stab him in the knees which he could reach. As for Texas Jack, the robbers had hauled him out



of a mass, and were apparently about to cut his throat.

But a new turn was given when they saw Buffalo Bill was holding a keg of powder in his hands. He lifted this right up at arm's length, although it seemed heavy and the effort was palpable.

"Look here," he said, in a lower tone, but the same incisive voice. "Into the fire this keg of powder goes, and, in a second, we shall be quit of ye all, though we go, too. Do you draw off—or shall this send all to doom?"

He strode out of the group two steps, beyond the astonished Frank's reach, and held the keg within the doorway. As if to emphasize his threat, a gush of fire lit up all the inside and shone with weird glory on his inspired visage.

"He'll do it, durn his hide," grumbled Tom Turmoil, and, without waiting for orders he shoved from his hands the girl and the guests of the Goldeena House to one side. She fell into her father's hands, but if he heaved a sigh of relief she did not sob or weep.

"Yes, we get out," added Chillturn, sullenly, as he drew back his improvised sword from menacing Wild Bill. "This hand is yours, but I shall have your scalp yet."

The two forces separated, and faced one another with baffled spite and ill-suppressed hatred. In the clear space between Buffalo Bill stood master of the position. No one doubted. They knew that he would rather remove those villains from the earth at the cost of these better lives than see them sack and pillage as rulers of the town.

As the robbers were slowly withdrawing, while fascinated by the keg which contained death for the multitude, Bill smiled.

In the confusion, it was not noticed that Texas Jack, insensible from a blow on the head, must have been borne away by the brigands.

On the other hand, their leader remained at the feet of the savior of the town.

With a last effort before he was fully overpowered, Frank had thrown his knife toward his men, retiring. It was the token of captaincy in the band, and, as such, Chillturn gladly picked it up.

"The villains," muttered Buffalo Bill. "Oh, that ever we were unable to stay them——"

"All the worse," said the marshal, binding a scarf about his strained knee, "that they have carried away Texas Jack with them."

"Then we follow," said Bill, with renewed animation. "Let's arm and make a start on the trail. Texas Jack among those devils, with that head devil the Englishman——"

"Bill," broke in a voice from one of the bodies on the ground, "you will have to strike many a blow, but with no good. If you had all the sogers and all the Government scouts you led into battle at

Birdwood Creek, you will not enter the cave of the Buzzards."

It was Fly Frank, and he wore a grin of exultation as he hurled his threat.

With a reaching out of his hand, Buffalo Bill caught him by the collar and dragged him into a sitting position by the heap of stores nearest.

"You have said too much and too little," cried he. "It don't take me long to remember how you Buzzards got possession of that natural fort. When the Nez Perces were chased right through here with old Chief Joseph, a band ran for that hole in the summit and fought off the scouts on their track. No one could find their way in, but it appears you scoundrels have another kind of luck than honest men. You took the stronghold by guile or strength, and—you hear me speak? you must deliver the pass to us."

"You are too fast, Buffler. You may remember well how we rustlers got into the Buzzards' Nest, but forget that it is prisoner for prisoner, and that your pard, Texas Jack, is in the cold grip of my merry men."

"They dare not harm a hair on his head," replied Buffalo Bill, contemptuously. "But as for you—the pass, or we pass you on to the judge whom nothing man offers can bribe."

"You have got a killing line on to me, Bill, I allow," said Fly Frank; "but we are sworn above all not to betray the secret entrance. I won't speak."

"Then you shall swing, with all the prisoners of your gang who have a gasp in them," interrupted Wild Bill. "There will be a day of execution in Goldeena such as man's eyes never gloated on since Slade and his twenty pulled the ropes tight in Virginy City."

"I expected to dance in air, Bill," replied the gambler, with the calm of the reckless Western sport. "Swing and be durned! I carry the secret with me, and it will cost you an army to get home with the Buzzards. You hear me!" and he chuckled.

The citizens had gathered round. The fires had burned out. The morning light glided the mountain tops. On Dule Trail they could see the shadowy forms of the successful bandits, filing over the height.

"Hark ye, Frank," said Buffalo Bill, "nothing but your holding the pass to your cutthroat's lair saves you on a narrow chance. Lead us to the inlet and you shall have a horse, a gun and cartridges, a day's grub and water, and twenty-four hours law. After that, count on it that Wild Bill and I are camping on your trail."

"I am mum."

"Say you so?"

But as he glanced round, such was the firmness with which the robber shut his jaws that he and the rest lost confidence that they could put a screw on.

White faces, and black, brown and yellow, all wore



a thwarted look. Unconsciously, Bill let his vexed glance wander and it stopped at a face which alone smiled feebly but with a different expression.

It was that of a half-breed Crow and Pawnee, a second thief, who might have attained eminence as a Government scout, but was too fond of the Fool's Water, or strong drink.

"Tawatsee," said Bill, with hope in his heart, as the red man's smile broadened a little. "Speak, Good Heart—for you are a chief, and are invited to the council of captains. I have not seen the Crows since you went on the reservation in the Judith Basin, but my brother is a brave and he speaks wisdom."

The Indian had helped in the fire-fighting as became a man.

"Very good, this is very good," said he, gratified at being singled out from the crowd, as all eyes were bent upon him. "Chief, you are right. Your red brother brings the means to make this enemy of white and red alike speak about the way in. There is a hidden way in. It is a talk of the lodges."

Frank lost color as the Indian spoke.

He knew their cunning in tortures. And not three days before he had jostled this man aside, as he was intoxicated and called him a dog.

"Chief, he must be made to speak," said Buffalo Bill. "Go right ahead with handling him. He is too tough for us."

The Crow-Pawnee pointed to the two tall pine staffs which ornamented the plaza or square of the town. On high days and holidays, they flew the flag of the State and that of the United States. The fire had not hurt even the halyards as it streamed over them.

"Bring them down in a bow, each," went on the Indian; "tie to each foot of the silent dog, and before he will let them be cut loose to rend him in twain, as the lightning splits the cedar, he will tell the word of the pass."

"Do this," said Buffalo Bill.

Two light men shinned up the poles, and secured the halyards respectively to the tips. Twenty men hung on to the ropes, new and bearing the strain well, so as to bend one after another. While bowed, the rope was made fast in each instance to the other mast. When this was done in both cases, the spars crossed near the axes, and were held so; within the poles the shape was of a pointed arched window.

"Swap ends," said Wild Bill, alluding to Fly Frank.

The willing citizens held up the gambler-robber, inverted him and in this upside-down position, now superintended by the Crow, fastened a leg to each rope in such a way that, when they should be severed below where he was attached, the masts would be released. By their spring, the man would be torn asunder.

"You see," said Wild Bill, as he looked on the

bandit, "any one can walk into a village, but the thing is to get safely out."

"Speak," said Buffalo Bill, sternly.

"This is playing low down on a white man," muttered Frank, unrelenting.

"Stand by to cut free," said Wild Bill, and two men, each with an ax, prepared to let the poles take their spring into the old upright position.

The gambler threw a despairing look around. Not a regretful eye met his; he had robbed, murdered and swaggered too long.

"Once—twice——"

At three times the ropes would be parted, and the gambler dismembered. But his pale lips were glued together.

He meant to die firm to his blood-cemented oath to the Ring of Crime.

Wild Bill, like a judge confronted by a prisoner "mute by malice," was about to order the execution when an unexpected interruption came.

Miss Mountrose, breaking away from her father, who wanted to shield her from the horrid sight, sprang between the dealer out of wild justice and the culprit.

"No," she pleaded, in her sweet voice—woman's voice was such a rarity out there then that it sounded strangely on those ears. "You have all shown yourselves so brave and noble to-night that I cannot bear to think that the day shall be branded by an act of cruelty. Spare him. Try him before a court for what he has done; but do not, I pray you, treat him with the inhumanity which, no doubt, he has exhibited to others. Not the law of 'An eye for an eye' is now ruling in our country—but 'Forgive us as we forgive others.'"

It was a brief sermon, but none the less effective.

"All right," said Buffalo Bill, the first to recover from his change of feeling.

"No, it ain't all right," interposed Fly Frank. "I am not with this fuss over. But she has melted the lump of ice that I called my heart. I am loth to go back on my pals, but, after all, they have had their glut in raiding this settlement. It won't be quits till you have a fair bout with them. But mind you, it will be a hard knot to chop—grappling with them on their own grounds. Here goes—let me loose, and I will lead you to the inlet. The rest consarns yourselves. Man can't put it no straighter, I judge."

"You put it square, Frank," said Buffalo Bill, making a sign for the axmen to set down their tools and untie the prisoner.

They were not sorry; like the two Bills, this bit of Indian practice was repugnant to their hearts.

Once again the gambler-robber's empurpled face whitened out into a natural color. He looked glum as the Crow himself, for one does not walk toward death with a blithe heart.

"A close shave," he muttered. "Them angels al-



ways come in handy for a man in distress, bless 'em. If it were not for you, miss," he said, raising his voice as Miss Mountrose, her act accomplished, shrank back to her father's side, "I should be dead."

"Silence!" said Buffalo Bill. "Attention, for we are not going to allow Jack to stay long in your companions' blood-stained hands. After arming and getting a bite to eat on the quick-step we make for the mountains. Deliver the entry to us and you go, as promised."

The King Bird of the Buzzards bowed his head.

But it was as much as anything to conceal a singular smile which flitted across his countenance.

The Crow chief looked at the men unrigging the flag staffs of the ropes so they should fly back into the up and down position, with a sour grimace.

"A snake," he mumbled. "He will be no good till crushed."

He armed himself for the warpath. He went after the marshal, and said:

"Chief, me chief—we want to go on the path to the Buzzards' Nest."

"Tawatsee, you are welcome. And keep an eye on that man. I have no stock in him, in spite of his submission."

The Crow slapped the handle of his gun in a meaning way.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE TRAITOR'S PORTION.

Fly Frank acted his deception well.

No one could find a flaw in his behavior as he conducted the party, with Buffalo Bill, to the deliverance of Texas Jack, unless he had been sacrificed for those bandits perished in the difficulty with Goldeena's citizens.

The order of the march was good; from the Sierra, if the robbers had sentinels posted, it must have looked hard to beat.

Besides, the special guard over the prisoner who had turned guide, another surrounded a cannon, bought to celebrate national holidays and carrying a six-pound ball. For the convenience of carriage, as soon as they rose above the foothills the ordnance was taken to pieces; four men carried the gun, two each wheel, and four more the carriage and ammunition.

While they were dismembering the cannon, there was a slight alarm.

The lookouts repeated the warning of Tawatsee that an enemy was in their path. But this lone man approached steadily in spite of the threatening attitude of the volunteers.

When within call he declared himself a friend.

"Oh, it is only Slim Sim!" said a prominent citizen, not a bit sorry that this individual was no herald of the enemy's corps.

Slim Simson was a peddler, who kept a little store where he sold goods at extravagant prices, but on time to the miners. Nobody but Frank knew that this rogue was a receiver of the bandit's pillage. He used to go down on the line in construction, the Missouri Pacific, Denver and Omaha and sell jewelry, and odds and ends, which might be identified in Goldeena, to the workmen of the contractors.

Not a soul suspected this double dealing. But Buffalo Bill was not prepossessed by his hatchet face, deep, small eyes, thin, firm lips, sly look, and slender frame.

The dealer in notions fell in line with such good grace that it would break one's heart to refuse him.

His explanation of his being in the gulch was satisfactory.

He asserted that he had not seen anything of the robbers, although hinting that at least one suspicious character had hovered round the entrance to the ravine as though in hiding.

Buffalo Bill seemed to guess who this might be, for he cut short further questioning of the recruit, and, the gun being dismounted, he ordered the forward move again.

Frank led them along the new coach road toward the south, but abruptly diverging, he tracked back to the mountain.

The trail gradually rose. A path led almost straight upward. At the point of its meeting with the crest a pine rose to a good height.

"It is a watch-post," remarked the guide; "let one climb up, and, as there is none of the Buzzards in it, as sometimes happens, he can make certain that they suspect no danger from this quarter."

This seemed fair play. The Crow, whose sight was not yet impaired by whisky bibbing, ran up the path, though almost perpendicular, without his breath being distressed. On reaching the divide, he paused to scan the neighborhood. All was serene.

He made some signs which Bill interpreted to the force.

"All is well. All quiet. At a distance on the plain, he spies something alarming—but that does not concern us. He is going to climb the tree to learn more."

So far the bandit had spoken the truth.

Tawatsee climbed the tree easily after reaching the first boughs by using a short rope, twisted on the spot from a vine, and forming a loop around both his body and the pine trunk; thus he could not fall, but might rest by leaning outward to its full extent.

Not a sign of man on either of the canyon sides. The Dead Mule Trail was lonesome. But down the plain he discerned the objects spied on the hill top.

He leaned out amid the branches, and dropping a pebble which a high wind had lodged in a crotch to call attention at the feet of Buffalo, he made the sign of cutting his throat and of clasping hands.



"He says that he sees Sioux Indians, and that he cannot be mistaken."

In fact, the Indian had made the sign of "the Sioux" in two ways, and, lastly, as the Dakotas, or Brothers.

Looking down into the deep cleft between the piles of granite, jasper, and sandstone, held together by bunch grass and artemisia, he descried a solitary man deviously winding his way by wading up the bed of the water. It filled the dalle, or trough, and only a stout and experienced trailer would have adopted this course.

Only such as Buffalo Bill and this Indian could have recognized the face at this distance.

"Wild Bill—good—he is not creeping along like a water-duck for nothing. The robbers will be surprised."

He chuckled, for there was no one to hear him. This discovery he did not signal to Buffalo Bill, as he knew the two to be brothers, and he supposed that Bill had not come with the party for good reasons.

Stare as he might, he could see no way over the gorge to that other side where the bandits had their retreat. Then he descended.

When on the ridge, he caught sight once more of the wanderer in the torrent, who made a sign to him that he had seen his head outlined on the edge. He waved an arm and sank down.

"Well?" questioned Bill, knowing that the scout would not report without demand.

"No sign. But I have seen a brother in the deep." This was uttered in the ear of Bill, so that the guide could not hear a word.

The captain of the party nodded. The marshal was acting in concert.

"But the way over and in?"

The Indian shook his head. There was no shame in being beaten. Frank grinned.

"Go on," said Bill, and the Crow took his place at the head of the line, with the gambler next, under the leader's rifle. He was sure to fall dead, if he darkened its sight.

They went on for a mile, skirting the side of the ravine. The path ran along a beach, for the most part, as level as if laid out by man.

All at once Bill and the red man gave a start at the same time. They had perceived, before the citizens, two or three threads like cobwebs, stretched with an elegant curve across the abyss.

"The way," said Frank, calmly.

In fact, on approaching, they saw that the thin threads were ropes rudely made. They formed a foot-path, two other ropes, a yard above them, and about the same distance apart, served as guide lines. But looking from one end across the chasm, bridged thus frailly, those who were not used to heights, such as

the plainsmen, and Indians might be pardoned for rating the crossing by such means foolhardy.

Near where the cords terminated over there, a mass of ivy formed a curtain. The rock was smooth, quartz-like, glittering with pay color, but it was likely that it was cracked or artificially pierced with a hole.

"Our cave lies in the heart there," observed Frank. "Say, have I not done my part?"

"It looks square," returned the captain, with a kind of reluctance. "But the contract is to lead us up to the door."

"It is in the rock, under that green mantle," was the traitor's reply. "I ought not to be made to risk my neck by crossing that bridge. I have never used it myself."

"You must go."

Bill had a tone in saying "must" which would bend a steel rod.

"You might as well have torn me in half that time," the scamp growled, but it was clear that he yielded.

The Indian would go with him, preceding as before; he began to make ready by taking off his army brogans, worn without socks, of course, which he carefully placed in a hole in the bluff. With his naked feet, he could hold on the rope. To have his hands free for the side ropes, he suspended his gun by its strap over his shoulder and behind his back. But he drew his butcher knife and meant to carry that between his strong teeth as he proceeded.

Buffalo Bill was bound to guard the near side and regulate his men as well as direct the firing of the cannon.

"Who was to be the rearguard to the guide?"

No answer. To walk on that single rope and balance by the breast ropes was all very well for savages and prairie hunters, but not for citizens, more familiar with the wheelbarrow track and the plank behind the store. They looked at one another with a frown, and glancing down into the chasm, which gave the vertigo, and up to the bluff edge, where marble blocks peeped over, they shuddered.

Still, there was one coming forward.

"Hooray for the Old Trapper! good boy Hossley!"

So shouted the citizens in their glee at having a representative. He was a curious codger, old Docked Hossley. He was called Docked because he had lost a hand and leg by frost bite.

He came forward to cross the rope, but if he liked the task his soured, grim face did not show it.

But, first, the bluff overhead had to be explored.

The stillness and absence of traces of man perplexed Buffalo Bill.

The inlet to the bandits' cave must be very strongly blocked, for not a sentry to be posted hereabouts.

Hossley picked out three friends like himself, spry and able to climb the steep, and they set out.



From the ledge where the party had halted, and the gun was set on its carriage, and the wheels fastened on, the only way was a goat's path. It wound so as to lead from one natural shelf to another, and only by degrees reached the summit.

The Docked One knew the top. It was a hill, with an immense view of nearly a hundred miles. When they got upon it, it was deserted, even by the vultures which sometimes held a gorging party on the verge.

The Old Trapper took a good survey, and bade his companions return.

"All's well," he reported to Buffalo Bill, impatiently awaiting. "Nary sign of Injin or rustler. The place is as lone as when Adam was a little boy. And hot! Jerusalem, how scorching hot! Declar' to high heaven that the sun has sucked up the Lookin'-glass Lake, as the gals I showed up here two years ago, put the name to it, so that you could not moisten the tongue of a lizard."

Well, how was he to know, since he had not looked properly for footprints, that the bandits had emptied the pond. They had, under the astute directions of their new chief, carried out all the water and poured it on the thirsty soil among the marble in a half-circle. The horns of this half moon line ended at the verge of the cliff. The crescent comprised a good slice of land, and as the bluff was scooped out under by the north wind, it projected over the ledge on which the robber-hunters were now gathered. The sunbeams had dried the surface again and no one could guess that deviltry was at work.

Thus reassured, and the cannon planted to command the bridge, Bill ordered the crossing.

First, to be certain that a door of some sort did exist behind the creepers forming a screen over against them, he ordered four men, who had placed chain shot in their guns, to fire a volley at this green veil.

The chain shot were rudely made by linking split balls with fragments of an old steel watch-guard in pairs. They had the effect wanted. Where they struck the vines, they cut the stems and down came a spread of some yards, not wholly detached. But pretty soon the mass fell by its own weight, and hung.

In the clear air, at that height, the shots sounded sharp and died away with little or no echo.

It did not appear that any hostiles were in hearing—not a show was made on the other side, any more than this.

The Goldeena party felt like cheering, but refrained.

Where the mantle of vegetation had been was disclosed a recess in the basalt stone, hard as steel, with a door of clumsy but solid make. As Frank had described it, it seemed proof to musket balls. It was

well, therefore, that they had brought the big gun along.

The veil of verdure which they had shot off hung down over the hollow beneath the ledge where this door barred the way into the cave, if there was one. A few unparted vines held it from falling all the distance into the bottomless pit.

At a touch, though, it would go. But it could do no harm, unless it crushed Wild Bill. He was, still unsuspected by the citizens, making his way up the stream, hidden by the depth and gloom.

The Crow went down on the rope and tested it with his foot. It was firm at the farther end as at this. It had not been tampered with. Indeed, next to go on it, Fly Frank stepped out with an unfaltering foot.

Not so with the dauntless Trapper. Old Hossley blanched, and all of a sudden complained that his false foot was not made to play the trade of a rope-dancer.

"Never mind," said Buffalo Bill, "we see what ails you. You had better take the back track. If you were not crippled, I should take your gun away, turn your coat inside out, tie your hands, and pack you home as a coward and deserter."

The fact was the peep down into the depth which one had to cross on that thread was sufficient for the Trapper.

"Sure, you are not far wrong," observed one of the band, consolingly, as Hossley did not resent the rebuke but gladly left them, "no man alive could trid on that bit of shtring, barrin' he wor a bird."

The Docked One departed without any one wishing him goodspeed.

If they had stood in less terror of Buffalo Bill's indignation, one or two more would have showed the white feather too.

He looked at them, inquiring for a substitute for the delinquent.

Ashamed at the backwardness in coming forward, one presented himself, while the Crow and the gambler were waiting on the rope bridge.

"Bravo, Slim Sim."

This the crowd murmured delightedly.

It was the unpromising recruit picked up on the march.

Never would Buffalo Bill have looked to see him jump out for a forlorn hope.

But this was no time to swap horses—Bill had to accept the new volunteer. The fellow had the good point that he was an excellent pistol shot.

Besides, he went upon the rope with a steadiness which no one could have beaten. One might have thought—as Frank knew—that he had passed over it before.

He drew a pistol, and examined the cap with an expert eye. He meant to keep this ready in one



hand, using only the other to hold on by in the crossing.

"It is well," said the captain. "Get on."

The file of three advanced, more and more slowly and cautiously as they reached the middle. The ropes had relaxed. The least push outward rendered the guide ropes useless as they opened out and would only drag the venturers to one side or the other and cause their fall. The main rope also sagged tremendously under the triple weight. Perhaps it was intended to be crossed by but one person at a time.

Tawatsee walked unhurried, with the confidence of one who was on safe ground. With his knife between his lips, he wore a fiendish grin, and while his eyes searched all the crevices of the rocks in front and all the holes in the vines, his ears were listening to what went on behind him.

No white man, save such as had slept at his camp-fire, like Buffalo Bill and his friends, did he trust.

He was not mistaken. Frank and Slim Sim were equally unreliable.

They had got to the middle of the rope without a sign to reward a doubter.

Here the curved rope took the upward bend. It is, in rope-walking, the hardest part of the task.

It gave the bandit some excuse to go slower still.

At a certain moment, indeed, Slim Sim, who almost fell up against him, had to prod him with his pistol and urge him on.

Those on the bank behind heard him say:

"Make haste!"

But they did not hear the added sentence:

"Will our friends inside draw the latch?" it may well be understood that it was thus worded to prevent the Crow chief, whose knowledge of English, was not so deep, from suspecting collusion.

Fly Frank, joyful at this proof that his guard was a friend at his back, did not trust his tongue. He bowed his head in assent.

Taking advantage of this lowering of the only object which intercepted his firing on the Indian, the artful Simson pulled the trigger. It looked to those on the bank that he was firing on the prisoner who, perhaps, had revolted. But it was the redskin who was struck.

He gave a yell, muffled, because he kept his teeth close on his knife, and they saw him half turn as though to face his slayer.

But the wound was too severe, or his strength failed him. He let go the hold on the side ropes. He pitched forward clean off that which his toes had clutched. They lost sight of him in the veil of green, vine and leaves, shot loose and hanging, as stated, from the verge of the shell before the ever closed door.

It was not held by enough tendrils to support this accession of weight. The green bonds snapped all together—the mass slid off, no doubt enveloping his

body with its serpentine twiners, as he caught it with a death clasp. Down, down, it fell, with accelerated speed, till it landed on the bank of the torrent. Not in the water, for they heard no splash. But on the stones, with a dull smash—from which resulted echoes as if the cannon had boomed.

Simson and Frank scrambled together to the ledge, but as they reached it, the ropes parted with their mad leap and simultaneous landing. They hung there, with toes dug in and fingers driven like spikes into the crannies of the rocks. Their backs, exposed to the Goldeena party, were fair marks which the litter of a barn door with an old army gun could not miss at twenty-five yards. But so far, although the Indian had been slain, it looked as though Sim had only mis-shot in trying to punish the guide for treachery.

The shot and the crash, again, had wakened nobody on the sides reached by them. The door seemed sealed up. Not even an eye gleamed at the wicket, which enabled one within to reconnoiter who knocked at it.

Of this Bill was sure. He had his unerring rifle raised, and he would have made him sightless who thus peeped.

If the two men purposed trickery, they were under fire and could be punished.

They might be punished by Heaven, for there they clung over a precipice of two hundred feet, unable to climb up for fear of dislodging the stones they scratched into, with nail and tooth. All held their breaths to see them, as we see such situations, in nightmare, and all sighed as the pistol, with which Slim Sim had shot the Crow chief, left his hand, wanted to strengthen his precarious hold, and fell so far that its reaching ground was not heard.

"Stay where you are," thundered Buffalo Bill, never long in coming to a conclusion. "If you rise, off go your heads."

He pointed the brass gun at the door; he was going to fire over the men on the brink, and hoped to smash in the cover to that ingress.

If the loaders had shoved in a few musket balls to re-enforce the stone used for ball, Heaven help the pair!

Only veteran soldiers can bear to have cannon fired over them.

"Fire!" said Bill.

In the midst of the roar a high, mad laugh of joy from the spot aimed at, seemed to hurl defiance. The ball struck the door and burst off one plank—the inner one, crossing it, was of hemlock, and though splintered, resisted its penetration. The ball remained embedded there like a huge bolt of iron.

At the discharge, Sim had been frightened; he trembled so that he lost his hold—he made an attempt to get a fresh one, but he slipped. He came down to



the niche where his companion in the fix was more securely nestling.

"Help!" he gasped.

"Go to the devil," said Fly Frank, believing that he was about to try to oust him from his place.

He reached out one leg and dealt a kick on the other's side.

"After what I did for you—oh, you ungrateful hound—may your end—be—more dreadful—than mine——"

The last words were uttered in space for Simson was dropping.

He turned twice, being such a light weight, within sight of the spell-bound watchers before he disappeared in the darkness of the gorge bottom.

The crash was but slight.

These on the other ledge heard it not. A sound more appalling engrossed them. Behind them, in the bluff, shaken by the concussion of the great gun, a mysterious crackling and grating was going on. The water, seeking its level, had trickled downward by a thousand apertures. Like the cleft by a large saber, it had detached the face of the cliff. Already overhanging and top heavy, such a disruptive cause was equal to an earthquake. With a sudden shriek of the grinding tone and the gravel, the vast mass toppled forward.

"Down flat and let it pass over," screamed Buffalo Bill.

This sage warning—the only practical counsel was spoken too late. The pile collapsed right upon his hapless comrades. He himself at the margin had just the time to drive the muzzle of his rifle into the ground where he stood to anchor himself.

Upon him came the edge of the earthen wall—on the others, the bulk of it. He bore the brunt well, but it blinded him and made his head bend. He was smothered in dust, scribbled with sand in every pore, brought to his knees. But the rifle barrel had held.

Two beside him were less shielded. They remained on the crumbling margin, cracking with the blow, but they were smothered—the weight had deprived them of breath. In the ruins the rest were buried.

For a moment, as he tried to collect his senses and clear his eyes, he believed that all had perished of his command. But presently a head and hands appeared here and there wounded with the jagged block of marble, which their blood veined with red, powdered with sand. Dazed, moving like figures of machinery, these wretches pulled themselves out and staggered blindly down the mountain side. It was by pure instinct that they thus fled homeward.

Buffalo Bill dared not recall them; what could he offer them now whom he had led into this death-trap? What an oversight to trust the reconnoitering of this undermined ground to the sapheaded Trapper Hossley?

He was alone with the dead under that pile of stuff, which it would take a corps of sappers and miners to remove.

Alone?

Not entirely, for a sneering voice came from over the abyss:

"We fight in our own way, Mr. Cody."

He looked, shaking the dust out of his long hair, and beheld Chillturn.

Flushed with gladness at this wholesale destruction, he had the aspect of the brigand chief in all respects.

## CHAPTER VI.

JACK ROPED.

"Villain; kill me, undefended, as suits such fighters as you," almost pleaded Bill, humbled by this crushing blow.

"I probably shall," was the quiet and heartless reply. "But before we proceed to business, let me finish with this whimpering cur at my feet."

Silenced by the enormity of the ruin wrought to the party which he had falsely piloted, Fly Frank, still clinging to the brim whence he had kicked his partner in misery, had in a low voice appealed to Chillturn from the time when he had seen him come out of the cave through the shattered door.

The Englishman advanced to the frail border, and without a twinge gazed on the wretch whom he had superseded.

"What do you want of me?" said he.

"Nothing," returned the gambler, frozen by the tone, "only life. Lend me your hand——"

"I am too content with the berth you placed me in. It enables me to revenge myself splendidly on my enemies. I had no idea that out here one might reign a king on the Sierra, or, 'pon my honor, I should have traveled into the West long before."

"But I lured those fools into this trap. I knew you would be warned of our coming by Slim Sim."

"Just so. He brought us word in time for the proper preparations to be made for their reception. I owe him something for that. They would not have broken into our fort, in spite of their howitzer, without extreme loss, but thanks to this trick of the cave-in, they have been more cleanly repulsed. I believe that they who crawled out of the rubbish—looking like ants whose hill has been kicked to pieces—will never return to storm the Nest of the Buzards."

He laughed so savagely that the gambler had barely the strength to say hoarsely.

"Help me up—my hands are opening—I will be your servant, your slave—I know so many dodges—I——"

Gambler Frank felt the ground splitting up, the stones loosening, and the fibers of the plants snap-



ping on all sides. In those careless eyes above him he read not a word of humanity.

"I am lost," he muttered. "What it is to take a snake to your bosom. May all the curses——"

At this moment the Englishman drew back, but with a final kick. A yard of the soil was pushed outward.

Fly Frank was beginning the descent which he had hurried Slim Sim into taking just as selfishly.

"Thief, you stole even your name—Fly Frank, why do you not fly?"

And laughing at his own brutal and stupid jest, he did not try to trace the gambler's fall by the sound of his touching the jutting rocks and that of his reaching the boulders.

"I am the chief, indeed," was all he said.

Disgusted by this cold-blooded murder, Buffalo Bill stooped to catch up the disabled rifle which he had thrown down in spite, to hurl it at the miscreant.

"Stop!" shouted Chillturn, "or you die. I am not, perhaps, your equal in long shooting, but at this sort range I can drop you. I want you to see the piece which I kept for your pleasure. Who is there? Bring forth Texas Jack?"

"Jack? Oh, Heaven!" groaned Bill. "I had forgotten that Jack was in that hell-hound's jaws."

He let the gun fall again, and, clasping his hands, wrung them in the intensity of his grief and distress.

At the same time, the doorway of the cave was blocked by five or six bandits. In their midst, pinioned carefully, so afraid were they, even with a score against Texas Jack, was this poor friend of Buffalo Bill. He looked round, dazed for an instant by the coming out into the light from the underground dark.

By the magnet of true friendship drawn to the object on the heap of fallen matter opposite, he recognized his old pard.

"Bill?" he said; "I knew I should see you once more before I went through."

"Yes, and shall see him through the halter," said Chillturn.

Then, making signs which the bandits comprehended with a sharpness that showed how well he had already drilled them, they carried them into execution without delay.

Above their heads, probably used as a crane when the rope bridge was thrown across the gulf, a pine tree slanted. Time and a cut or two with an ax had lopped off most of the boughs. It stuck out like the jibboom of a ship. It was not difficult, though dangerous to one who was not a seaman, or a muleteer accustomed to heights, to go up and out to its end. Hanging over the chasm, a Mexican adjusted the end of a hide lariat to the tip of this spar. He let the noose hang down, and by swinging it to and fro helped one of his fellows to catch it and draw it in.

In another minute while he descended, the noose was placed round the neck of Texas Jack.

They pushed him to the broken edge. It was plain that nothing on the level where the group stood could rescue the doomed one. That anything would stay the hanging, he who looked at the smiling, inflexible face of the Boss Bloodspiller might never expect.

"At the word, push him off," said the bandit chieftain.

Two men stood ready to push Jack off the fragile footing. He would drop ten or twelve feet from the slack of the lasso, and, with his neck broken, swing in the gulf at the end of the attachment to the projecting tree, like the bob of a gigantic pendulum.

Bill exchanged a farewell look with him.

He let his disheartened vision fall to a lower step. What was his amazement—he dared not feel any relief yet—to catch the unique glitter of an Indian's glassy eye. Yes, under the feet of the bandits, impossible for them to divine his presence, in a niche of the cliff, Tawatsee was crouching. When the vines fell he had not been dragged to death by them. He was there, whole in bones and heart; with his scalping knife in his hand, and his gun unfired at his back.

Bill read what was in his soul.

"At least they may hang Jack, and they may riddle me with bullets—but one shot of the chief will revenge us. He is going to kill that cursed rascal, if he has to follow him till their locks are gray."

He looked up so lightened and invigorated that the enemy was startled.

"Oh, your turn next!" he said. "Push!"

The two bandits united their efforts. Jack was unable to resist the shove, but he had his foot sufficiently in command to deal one blow for revenge. The man on his right, hacked in the shin by the boot, doubled up with exquisite pain, and, losing his balance, tumbled over the bluff just before Jack followed him close.

At the same instant, Buffalo Bill saw the Indian toss him the gun, and seem to leap after it.

The gun, tossed longwise, not hurled, would have alighted on the shelf at Bill's foot, so dextrous was the cast, but he was afraid to lose it, and that the shock might explode it. He stooped and caught it in both hands. Then he arose, armed.

Not one of those on the opposite shelf had observed this singular act.

But they had seen the Crow spring out of the ambush. Mad fellow that he was, he caught the rope which was tightening as Jack dropped, not with his hand, but with the edge of his trenchant knife. He severed it clean, and passing forward with the impetus of his leap, they heard the echoes of the canyon awake with the war-whoop of the Crow.

"Whoo-oo-ee!" yelled Buffalo Bill, in answer.



"By the great horn spoon, you have done it clean! He may be smashed or drowned, but he'll not die hung."

The bandits shrank from the fatal edge where one of their number had been precipitated to avenge the victim. Alone, spite of the rifle which he now perceived, as by magic, in the grasp of Buffalo Bill, their leader stepped to the rim.

Just then the two bodies fell. That of the red man, for he had calculated the curving fall like a scholar, went straight into a pool where the torrent temporarily widened and no doubt deepened. He splashed into the pellucid basin and was gone.

But it was not in him that the baffled Briton was interested.

Texas Jack, bound and trussed, was falling into the torrent, too, and he could not hope for the escape which might reward the redskin for his fearless plunge. In fact, he fell like a lump.

"Curses on them, all!" cried the looker-on. "A friend was in waiting—he has saved him."

It was true. Wild Bill, having a clew to the approaches to the cavern, had set out to get up to it by following the bed of the torrent threading the gully. When he arrived, the fall of the vine instructed him that affairs were likely to be lively above. He ensconced himself in the rocks, and anxiously abided the subsequent incidents.

In the bandits he took no interest. He did not offer his shoulder to break the shock of either Slim Sim, Frank, or the bandit whom Jack had tripped. But it was a different matter when he saw the chief leap out from the hiding-place, and cut Jack from the lasso. The Indian came up, unhurt from his dive, but Texas Jack, bound, would have remained at the bottom but for the plunge which Bill took to fish him up.

Half an hour after, Buffalo Bill stood in the black depth of the canyon, and grasped the hands of his red and his white friends.

"You should have seen them slope," he said, "when I stood with the gun that would work in my fist. Pah! if you had better cartridges, chief, for yours were not fit—I should have killed every man of the herd crowding in at that cave door. Worst of all, the head man got away. He only stayed to exchange one shot, and then I winged him. I forgot that the dog wears a steel shirt; and I ought to have plugged him in the head."

The Crow took back his rifle with pleasure, and patted it with his brown paw, as he reloaded the magazine.

In three hours they had returned to Goldeena. They were given up as lost, for Docked Hossley had preceded them and the other fugitives, who could tell no intelligible story, with a tale that the bandits had annihilated the entire outfit.

The real relation was dispiriting enough. In vain

did the marshal try to put pluck into them. This disaster after the fire had demoralized the town. They would not have mustered three strong to repel an invasion of Digger Indians.

"We cannot attack the bandits' fort," said Buffalo Bill, reluctantly, "till enough brave hearts lope along, but we can make them keep watch o' nights."

"Well," said Texas Jack, speaking hoarsely, for his throat was chafed, "if we were inclined to let the thieves severely alone, it is not the same there. I heard enough of their projects in that den, which, half carried out, will stir up this section like a wagon-load of yellow jacket's nests."

"Against the varmint, then, we go on the war path," said Buffalo Bill.

"I resign being marshal over such counter hoppers," added Wild Bill; "take my war stick into the bundle."

"I shall never draw an easy breath till I handle that brute who wanted to hang an honest scout like one of his own gang," said Texas Jack.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE SIOUX ARE OUT.

A goodly body of horsemen were speeding to strike the coach road, and would do so at the little station where the horses were sometimes refreshed after the dreary, stifling pull over the alkali desert. It bore the name from old times before a white face reflected the ardent sun, of Medicine Rock.

The riders went in double file like military. But they were surely not regular cavalry. Their accoutrements were more to the taste of each individual, and the weapons were varied and inlaid with precious metals as well as studded with native gems.

All of a sudden, Tom Turmoil, who was riding just a half length back of his captain, to whom he was already thoroughly devoted, pressed on to be cheek by cheek.

"Can you see that smoke column?" he inquired, with the respect which they all felt for the energetic and unscrupulous Chillturn.

"Can't say I do," was the reply, for, while the newcomer's sight was as good as his neighbor's, he had not long prairie experience.

"Well, it rises there on the road by the Medicine Rock."

The word ran down the lines. Some winced; they guessed it was a signal smoke. Perhaps Indians.

"They said that some bad Indians were out, crossing from one reservation to another to stir up mischief—is it they you see?"

"No see Injin? That is just what you can't see until too late. I hope, sir, that they have not struck our coup."

"What, stopped the coach to Deadwood? If they



interfere with our schemes, so help me, I will add some lead to their ballast, which will make them sail steadier for the future."

The troop went on at a hard gallop, a trifle less swiftly than before, as caution might be needful.

Tom rode in the van, as he was the best scout.

"They have set fire to something," he called out, returning to the troop. "It is the station or the coach, or both."

"They have gone," said Captain Chillturn, using his pocket field-glass, "they have set fire to the hut, which burns slowly, and retreated."

"Be wary, sir," said the ever-prudent Turmoil Tom. "The red beggars always retreat—they fight best when going back'ard."

"Bah!" said the Englishman, eager for a brush, "come on, lads. And you, Tom, nobody's holding you back."

Indeed, all clapped the cruel spurs to the horses, and rushed like an avalanche upon the scene.

It was one of bloodshed and pitiful misery.

Before the fired log-and-frame house lay two butchered bodies.

One was that of Guthrie, the station agent. The other was an Indian.

Guthrie was dead, stuck full of arrows. The Indian, with the cat-like hold on life of his race, still breathed, but his wounds, with shot and knife, were mortal. Though not merciful usually, Chillturn, who had never before seen scalped victims, waved his hand for one of the men who had dismounted to blow out the palpitating wretch's brains.

"Put out the fire next thing," he ordered.

The fire put out, a couple explored the simple interior; the plunderers had taken out every stick. A few keepsakes which Guthrie had brought over from old Scotland were wantonly smashed and disfigured.

"Burn an Injin, anyhow," said Tom; "I on'y wish they had stayed round convenient, so we could have fired into them."

While his men were digging with an old spade and their knives, a grave for each of the victims, and one, a Mexican, whittling off the broken fence crosses to mark the places, Tom, as the expert in Indian lore, scrutinized the ground.

"They are Sioux, mostly," continued Tom, not sorry to show that he was useful to have about the band; "see how careful they were in stepping about when they tortured the poor fellow, not to break the burning sticks. That would be a bad omen."

He left the spot, and went all round the house. At the north side he stopped and examined some marks made by a knife and smeared with blood.

"Here you are, captain, plain as books——" and he pointed to a sort of picture.

"This is the main body, but there is a party or two also out, which are to call here to see how they are

getting on. This tells who were here and whither they are next going."

"Who are they, then?"

"Well, just what I said, Sioux. The chiefs are Old Prairie Bear, Martotinta, and his adopted son, Running Eagle. They call Bear the Old Woman, Wem-seena, because he has been paralyzed since scalded by fat spilled over him in a drunken shivaree at a soldier-feast. They have to tie him in the high Mexican saddle, and I could show you that a horse was led up to the council, and that one on foot stood at the bridle. Without alighting, then, he presided at the discussion and the torture."

"And the precious scamps over whom Running Eagle and this cripple reign?"

"Oh, they are a bad lot, refugees, wild young men, fugitives from all tribes, who have not accepted the reservations. They have grown to form a race by themselves, the Bad People, and, you bet high, they are a bad crowd to knock elbows with, out here or in the foothills."

The lieutenant spoke solemnly, and his captain had no desire to jibe, for all the bandits' countenances were likewise grave.

"In fact," said Fly Frank's successor, "no one will dig their graves if we collide with them?"

"Nary grave, captain."

"All right, we will take back any plunder they may carry, if we meet. Where do you cipher out they have gone, for I would rather we had the course clear for our stopping the Deadwood coach?"

His lieutenant studied the picture once more.

"They have gone south and east but—— Ah, this indicates they will return."

"Look at that, now," cried the leader, so that all the rustlers could hear him, "they will ride into our lines. If they return, laden with plunder, why, we will pluck them of every feather; and it will be our policy, for this territory is not wide enough for two of a kind to cavort within."

For the first time, the robbers did not wear a glad air.

At present, though, the coach was to be waylaid. A third of the party might hide in the shadow of the little injured hut; another detachment could hold off at a distance, ready to gallop at a signal; while the remainder could ambush at a hundred yards in a clump of planted cottonwoods.

Tom and his captain remained by the house.

"The coach is late," said the latter, nervously; as he consulted a watch, which he had smuggled into the country. "We shall look fools if the Indians have gone farther along and cut us out of the job by going through it."

"I cannot say," returned Tom, using the other's field-glass; "but lay low, fellows, here are the Injins."

It was in vain that the Englishman stared and with



the glass, also; he saw absolutely nothing on the line of desert and sunny sky.

"Well," he said, after a pause, "the wind is getting up. I see the sand spinning to the southeast."

"Yes, the Sioux are doing all the spinning; they are kicking up that dust. The coach is grinding along in the dust, and they are trying to conceal themselves behind it in an imitation of a sand-storm. But if old Clint Burdsall is drivin', as is likely, they won't throw no dust into his peepers—he will see through that they are hostiles. Then he will put the bronchos through at a hill-to-split gait."

Not only did a long streaming cloud of sand arise, but a more dense and rounder one as well; this to the novice might have been taken for one of those dust spouts which career over the plains and disperse as mysteriously as they are raised and hurried on by a sudden blast.

"That rolling cloud is the coach," said Turmoil. "It is a race now betwixt and between the Sioux and the stage. We hold the casting vote. Are we to let the men of our color go under, and drive off the winners, or sail in and knock spots out of the reds?"

In a moment Chillturn had resolved on the course.

"Tom, and boys," he said to those within earshot; "I take it that you all know my game. To pile up some wealth and go on a grand hurrah. To pile up in these days, one must be very lucky or very plucky. We must be unsparing to all but those of our band. Buzzards do not eat buzzards, but they devour all other living things. Let the reds destroy all in that coach and enjoy what they appreciate. Their we will come in for our share—the coach."

"The coach?" repeated Tom, thinking the other had gone mad. "Are we going to run the stage line for a living?"

"One trip, my dear boy," said Chillturn, laying his hand on the other's shoulder familiarly and looking him in the eye. "Surely we have one of us who can drive as well as Burdsall, and several to personate the passengers? Let them go on to Goldeena and Deadwood, picking up passengers in addition, and the effects—perhaps some express packets of value, and, on the road again, we will overhaul it. With our men 'inside the fort,' they cannot resist—we clean them out lovely."

The men in hearing grinned.

"That is all right. But those Sioux? They will not agree to let us stand in."

The Britisher smiled, contentedly.

"I have not your knowledge from practice of our red brother," he said, quietly; "but I am not totally ignorant of their little peculiarities. Such a band as you describe must have their battle flag, the possession of which gives the holders a sway of the band."

"Better than that, the Old Woman chief has the sacred totem of the Brules—the Burnt Thighs, as they call themselves—the brand with which the

initiation mark is burnt. Ah, if we could lay hand on that, they would have to put their necks under our foot."

"You see how we can get them." He spoke triumphantly.

"But it is guarded—whoever heard of seizing the totem in the teeth of the fighting men?"

"We are going to do things never heard of, my dear fellow," replied the leader, calmly.

"But he would lose his life who attempted it—to touch the sacred emblem is death—though they had to live on his trail for ages."

"Then he must die," responded the Briton, with the same deadly calm. "My dear Tom, you will not live three days more."

"Goodness of Heaven, what a poor joke!"

"I speak the cold-drawn truth, my poor Tom. That cut on your foot, received in the fight with the Goldeena people, and which you make such light of because it had healed—it is sure death."

"That cut?"

"You complained, not of a pain there, but in your leg and this morning up your other side. Well, that cut was made by the poisoned bowie knife of that great knave the late unlamented Frank Messiter, alias the Fly One—and you are as dead mutton as he."

"It is true if—that— Do you, sir, who are learned, say that I have no hope?"

"Not a morsel, my poor Tom. I had taken so much affection to you that I held back from hurting your feelings, but I prepared for the worst. Dusenbury, look here?"

One of the rustlers rode forward from the side of the house.

"What did I direct you to do, four days ago, when you rode to Hot Springs?"

"I don't care to say before Tom," stammered the man, a black-bearded giant, but who was abashed as a schoolboy.

"Well, I will tell it, since it was my errand. He slipped into your letter to your good old mother in the Lehigh Valley, who tells her neighbors that her boy is prospecting for gold out West, a bank draft on the National of Philadelphia for a thousand dollars. I kind of knew that you were sickening with that venom, for which there is no cure, and I hate to have a woman suffer."

"You did this, captain, on awares?"

"He did that, Tom," said Dusenbury, and then, surprised at his own emphasis, he retired to the ambulance without waiting to be dismissed.

Tom turned eloquent eyes on his commander, who showed himself in an entirely new light.

Chillturn knew well how to handle these men, who were rough and hard, and bad, too, but had some weak spots in their heart. He held on his hand, and, as Turmoil gripping it, bent over it, he fancied a hot tear fell on the back.



"What's your orders, captain?" said Tom, rising and drawing himself up in the saddle, like a soldier ready to charge on a desperate mission.

"I want to make myself solid with those Indians, for the coach, which they would cut to strips, and, perhaps, burn, is useful to a conceit of mine. I want to carry out of Goldeena in it the girl whom you saw in the affray, pleading for the life of Frank. Much good that did him—a villain who carried poisoned steel, by which the loss of so useful a man as you has come about."

He paused as if hesitating to confide too much of his secret, even to one who, he said, was about to die. But assured, he went on:

"To buy the prize from the reds, I am wanting to ask you to lay down your life where it will do us the most good. You must die, Tom—and what matters a sun shining on you one day more or less?"

"Not a jot. You have made my mother's old age serene, and here goes for a dash at the red devils—I will snatch the totem from the sacred guard, and you shall have it."

"This is the plot, then. Let them stop the coach, and kill all upon and in it—it will be butcher's work spared us. As they are all engaged, it will be easy for you to ride at the reserve where the tribal emblem is held. As you bear it away, we will ride after and between you and those who chase. We will recover it, and bargain for its return."

"If I have the strength in me, I will do it," said Turmoil, quietly. "The fact is, I feel worse since you told me what was the matter."

"That often happens. I swear that if my heart's blood would heal you, they might stab me and inject it into your veins. You are a trump, Tom, and I hope Dusenbury, who is some kin of yours, will prove to be of your bone and blood also."

"Dolph is my father's brother's son, and a brick. I have been out here three years longer than he, and he is not my mate for prairie sign, but he will earn. Let me speak to him about home and mother before I pass in my checks."

The captain held his field glass before his eyes as the men conferred.

"How I play with these fools," he said to himself. "The man was likely to live longer than I. But I have scared him into being a hero of self-sacrifice for the band. Without a little artifice, the Buzzards could go all to pieces."

He was interrupted by a call from his men. The sand clouds had broken into three—two coming to flank the central one. Out of this emerged the moving specks, which were the six horses drawing the Deadwood coach.

"They come, they come!"

"I am ready for the dash," said Tom, jumping

down to tighten the girths and almost instantly springing up again. "I shall leave my mark on some of them before I am rubbed out."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### SCOUTS ON THE REVENGE TRAIL.

From the south Buffalo Bill's band approached the party of Bad People returning to overtake the Deadwood coach and repeat by the little station on a larger scale the murders of that morning.

The hunters saw the coach pass on the dusty road before they came on the unmistakeable traces of the redskins.

The Crow was to the fore, as his race can see farther and read changes in the natural features even better than our hunters.

After crossing the creek and the Cheyenne, he fell back, and by signal called in the others, who were fanned out.

"We can go no further," he said, illustrating by laying twigs of willow on a flat rock. "A band is in our path. The others have gone on, and I should not wonder if they do not intend to strike the coach at the halting place in the long stretch of desert."

"Guthrie's?"

"Yellow-hair Bob's, yes," said Good Heart. "This band has spare horses, stolen or brought along, to put women prisoners on."

"Oh, you think they know of ladies in the stage? That is odd, for, except that foolish Judge Mountrose bringing his daughter out here, I should not look for other women to be risked."

"Maybe some singers for the saloons in Deadwood," said Marshal Bill, dryly.

"What is it, chief?" asked Buffalo Bill, seeing that the Crow had not said his say.

"The spare horses are what we want."

"He is right. Here goes then for this band, and to mount ourselves. Certainly, we have no chance set afoot with the whole of that regiment on good nags."

They kept nigh the coach road, and now and then crossed it when it took a circuit.

"These fellows have been not at all backward in showing their trail," remarked Bill, pointing to a broad trail of mounted men.

"And look, where one of them has been thrown, and they have not troubled to pick him up," said Texas.

"Him dead," said the Crow.

All hastened to the spot where a man and his pony were stretched dead; but the white men receded in disgust.

The man was a slender youth, stripped to his under garments, and his head had not only been taken off with a clumsy stroke or two of a coarse



knife, but replaced by that of his horse—that animal's neck was adorned with the human head.

"What mockery! the red devils! What harm had this boy done them?"

"Look!" exclaimed the Crow chief, pointing to white objects intermingled with blue and yellow ones, strewing the sand. "The papers which talk."

"Letters," said Texas Jack, running to pick up some of the scattered envelopes, which had been broken open, but in cases which retained the letter within.

"It was a pony rider," said Buffalo Bill, with a sharper pang than his companions, for he had been in that arduous and dangerous business when a boy. "Even the Buzzards and road-agents let a pony express go by without a shot. It is only these remorseless fiends who would not only waylay the harmless rider, but spread the loving messages on the wind."

The leather satchel was turned inside out.

Coming from the mines, some of the letters homeward bound had contained specimen gold spangles. The greedy plunderers had burst all the wrappers to get at these, of which they knew the value at the unscrupulous traders' counter window, but they had scorned the drafts of Fargo, and were, on the whole, baffled in ideas of gain.

They had vented their spite by exchanging the heads of their victims, thinking that would exasperate any white men who discovered the remains.

The white men collected the papers, and replaced them in the satchel. They would hang this up in plain sight on the first telegraph post or tree, where it would be descried from the road.

"Some came from Goldeena," remarked Texas Jack.

"Very likely, though they do not pan out well on education there."

They went on, more under Bill's guidance than before, as he had an excellent field glass, and the plain was so level. Only two swells of it afforded cover, and at the second they saw the mounted Indians disappearing over it. They were so much lower afoot that the advantage was on their side in dogging them.

These fellows kept at the same distance from their friends, as the latter returned to the station. The smoke there had ceased to rise. One could not tell that the murder and pillaging had taken place that morning.

The scouts hastened on to the rise, and this time felt that the first stage of their undertaking was done.

The rearguard had come to a halt. They were signaling to their friends by reflections, and seemed commanded to rest where they were.

Unsuspecting of the bandit's nearness to the house on the road, the main body fearlessly began the open chase of the coach.

From the windward, the scouts could see them and the heavy vehicle under the sand clouds which they stirred up.

"They are bunched, boys," said Buffalo; "we have got them. You may shoot, for the others are galloping on and will not hear a forty pounder on this butte."

Nevertheless, they all relied on their small arms and slung their rifles by the straps to their backs. Their knives they tried to be sure they played loosely.

They dropped at the rounded crest, crept up a few yards to the very edge, and looked over and down, with their heads enmeshed in the bunch grass. Covered with dust they were gray as the sage, and no one could have espied them.

But the red rascals, glad of the repose, were not looking for trouble in this quarter. Three or four had alighted to sprawl on the grass, but they held the reins of their ponies. All but one of the others, a dozen all told, had American horses, some with cavalry brands and trappings, and they thought too much of them to dare to get off.

"Ready?" asked Bill, in a whisper.

And without waiting for an answer, for he knew his men—he darted down the slope.

The whites went at the reds in silence, but the Crow, always losing control at this exciting instant, uttered a yell as he leaped at the first Sioux down in the grass.

Bill rushed at another, and held him from moving as he blew a hole in his side. At the same time, Wild Bill, who was no laggard in such a race, brought down his pair as they started to ride off, with a pistol in each hand.

Leaving Jack and the Crow to finish those dismounted and unsaddled by this vigorous onset, the two Bills ran after the horsemen and popped them off as they were strung out by the flight.

One alone bade fair to escape, as he was not seriously hurt. But luckily, one of his comrades dying, called him to save his scalp, for he knew the



Crow's warwhoop had meant "hair," though the whites might despise such trophies.

He wheeled and galloped back, but a discharge from Buffalo Bill's revolver killed his horse as well as himself. He pitched off, and, falling on the one he had returned for, knocked the last breath out of his body.

Another horse, entangled with a fallen rider, had also to be shot, as it was hurt.

The others were captured by Texas Jack, who mounted one and circled the flyaways so as to round them and head them back.

Being American horses, they had no fear of the white men like the mustangs, and were thus made prisoners.

They were ready to go. The Indian wavered, and finally said:

"Go on. Let me destroy the weapons. It is the rule to leave no weapons on the line of retreat."

When he joined his companions, he had some fresh scalps at his belt. He still had blood in his eye, and no one passed any remark.

They had a bigger task yet on hand.

## CHAPTER IX.

### RUN DOWN.

Buffalo Bill's force was not a large one, but a picked one.

It had been picked from the best men in Goldeena for a Trail of Revenge.

The Buzzards had run off all the horses, many laden down with plunder, and the three scouts, the Crow Indian and the volunteers had to all go on foot.

But they had taken the trail of the Buzzards from their cavern and followed it for a couple of days, Buffalo Bill cutting off miles here and there through his knowledge of the country.

When the Indians had left their horses to capture the stage coach the scouts had quickly gotten possession of the animals, as has been seen.

These horses mounted all of the Trailers, and, led by Buffalo Bill, the charge was made, and just in time to save the coach.

The Indians were struck with amazement.

The attack on their own horses was so wholly unexpected in the very minute of their success, the fire of the scouts so terrible, the charge, led by Buffalo Bill, so irresistible, that the Indians were shot down by dozens. The few who survived the charge scat-

tered in all directions while the coach rolled past in a cloud of dust.

In the meantime the Buzzards, led by Chillturn, were approaching at a rapid pace.

Their leader did not know what to make of the new turn affairs had taken, and before he could distinguish anything in the cloud of dust he was close upon the great scout and his followers.

"Get that coach on its way, for there are women in it," cried Buffalo Bill to his Goldeena allies.

"We've got the redskins going, so there lies our game," he cried, pointing to the outlaws. "Come, men, and no mercy!"

Like a whirlwind, the Avengers, with Buffalo Bill leading the center, Wild Bill the left, and Texas Jack the right, were upon the amazed Buzzards, who were taken by surprise and were seized with terror at beholding those whom now they had every cause to fear.

There was a fearful crash, the deadly rattle of rifles and revolvers, clash of steel, cries and shouts and the battle was won.

It was a red end for the outlaws, and they covered the ground all about, dead and dying, only a few escaping death.

All their horses and booty were captured, and the victory was complete.

The stage, with its passengers, drove on in safety, and in it were Miss Mountrose and her maid, for Mr. Mountrose had very quickly decided to leave the burned town and its misery, bloodshed and horrors behind him, so had taken the first coach Eastward.

Buffalo Bill searched the plain for the body of Baron Chillturn, the Demon Man-Killer, as his outlaw band had named him.

But, wounded, or dead, Chillturn was not found, and Buffalo Bill said in a voice strangely revengeful:

"Some day I will find him, for he cannot escape, yes, and when he dies I will be there!"

To-day Goldeena is a thriving place, but held in reverence by its citizens will ever be the name of Buffalo Bill.

THE END.

Next week's issue (No. 41) will contain, "Buffalo Bill at Painted Rock; or, After the Human Buzzards." Chillturn and many of his horrible band escaped, but Buffalo Bill finally hunted them to their death at Painted Rock. Read about it as published for the first time in next week's issue.



# PRIZE ANECDOTE DEPARTMENT.

In a week you will read the names of the winners of this contest. You know all about the new contest we announced last week. If you want to refresh your memory you will find a list of prizes and full directions on page 30. Here are some of the late arrivals in Contest No. 2. They are well worth reading.

## Nearly Drowned Twice.

(By Edwin Then, Minn.)

### THE FIRST TIME.

One fine afternoon last summer my brother, some other boys and myself went out to Lily Lake, about one mile from our home, to take a swim.

My brother was in the water already, and I came in after him, walking in the water until I came up to my knees. Then I took a dive. When I came up again I couldn't touch bottom. I called to my brother, who came just as I sank under the first time. When I came up again my brother gave me a push, and swam after me; when I came up again he gave me another push and swam after me again. He gave me one more push, and I could touch bottom.

I got out of the water as soon as I could, and dressed myself, and ran home as fast as my legs would carry me. I tell you I will never go near that place again.

I found out afterward that this lake is known to be a very dangerous lake, as there are places of unknown depth, which go straight down. Some persons have been drowned there already.

### THE SECOND TIME.

On the night of the second of January I was going to get an armful of wood. We had a cistern a little below the porch, and it was open, but I didn't know it, so I jumped off from the porch onto the cistern. I fell in, but caught hold of the cover. It slammed shut. I held on to it, and my brother called to my mother, who came out, and they both caught hold of my hand, but my mitten came off and I dropped into the cistern. It was lucky there wasn't much water in it or I would have drowned. Oscar, my brother, threw one end of a rope down to me. I tied it under my arms and waited until a neighbor came over and helped Oscar to pull me up. When I was on the porch again I untied the rope from me, and went into the house, took off my wet clothes and went to bed.

## An Adventure with Two Tramps.

(By James Ballew, Des Moines, Iowa.)

Upon reading of the Prize Contest in the famous Buffalo Bill weeklies, of which I am a constant reader, I decided to write you about one of my adventures which happened last summer.

I wanted to find out something about tramps and their ways, so I donned an old coat, an old pair of overalls, and a slouch hat. I journeyed to Tama City, where I saw two tramps sitting on a plank under a water tank of the C. M. and St. P. R. R., which runs through Tama City. I sat down with them, and commenced talking. They seemed rather suspicious at first, but as soon as I took them to a restaurant, and paid for a square meal apiece for them they became as familiar as if they had known me for years.

That night, before dark, we three went into a refrigerator car to sleep. As soon as I had crawled up into the car they both sprang in after me.

"Say, kid," said the one called Red; "we want that little roll of bills we saw in that restaurant."

"Hurry up, too," said the one called George.

Of course I refused, so they both made a grab for me. I fought with all my might, but they soon overpowered me. One sat on my knees, while George knelt on my chest.

"Get off," I exclaimed, for the man's weight on my chest was nearly killing me. "I'll give up."

Red came to a sitting posture, and George stood up.

Seeing that I was free, I sprang up quick as a flash, and dealt Red a blow squarely behind the ear. It was so unexpected that he was sent down all in a heap, and his head struck a corner of the door, knocking him senseless. George sprang at me, but I suddenly reached down and grabbed him around the shins, and with a jerk, completely upset him.

I sprang out of the car and ran squarely into a night watch, or policeman, before I had gone a block. I quickly told him about my adventure, and together we hastened back to the scene of my late scuffle. Red had recovered, and George was helping him out of the car. They gave up quietly, for the "copper" showed them a little "reminder" in the shape of a Smith & Wesson revolver. They looked rather chagrined because I had gotten the best of them. The next day they were sentenced to make a little visit to the county "lock up." As for myself, I returned home as quickly as possible, and you may be sure I have never gone on another tramp since.

## A Fisherman's Snake Story.

(By Cleo. Ballinger, Ind.)

I arose from bed one Saturday morning about the twenty seventh day of April, got my fishing tackles, mounted my wheel and started for the river. It did not take me long to go to the river bridge, where I left my wheel, and started to walk to the sliding banks. As I walked along the banks looking for a good place to fish I would push rocks over the bank and watch them roll down the bank into the water about forty feet below. I placed my shoulder against a large rock and gave a push just as the rock gave way. I slipped and went rolling down the bank into the river.

I had a good ways to swim before the banks were low enough to climb. Just as I started to swim down the river a large snake swam out of some reeds and started after me. I kicked with all my might, trying to scare the snake away. All at once he disappeared. I thought I had scared him away when suddenly I felt something tighten around my legs, and I began to sink. The snake had wrapped itself around my legs.

When I saw I was sinking I turned over on my back and began to float. I reached in my pocket and got my knife and cut the snake away from my feet. I swam down to the ford, where I got out of the water and ran back to the bridge and got on my wheel and rode home. I have not been to the sliding banks since.

## Caught on a Railroad Trestle.

(By Willie Skakel, Iowa.)

I will give you my adventure on a railroad trestle.

The trestle just had enough room for one train to pass over at one time and about one foot on each side of each outside rail. It was where the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad crosses the Big Sioux River. The bridge was about forty feet above the river, and about one block from the Big Sioux Falls. It was a quarter of a mile long.

I had started to go over the trestle to my chum's house, and I thought I could get across before the nine o'clock train



came. I had hardly got on the trestle when the train came around the Point. I started across for the other side; but I saw it was of no use. I crawled through the ties and put my gun (my chum and I were going hunting) lengthwise across the two ties. I had crawled through and held onto the barrel of it.

In a short time the train came thundering over me. Hot cinders and ashes burned my face, head and hands. I tried to climb up and get on top of the trestle, but I was so weak I was unable to do so. Then I yelled as hard as I could. I could stand it no longer. All grew blank and I thought I was going at the rate of sixty miles an hour on a merry-go-round. Then my grip loosened and down I went to the rocks in the swift current below just above a forty-foot falls.

When I came to I was lying on a pile of straw in my chum's barn. My chum and a lot of workmen were standing near. They told me they had heard me yell, and had caught me with a rope just as I was going over the falls.

### In a Runaway.

(By Keith Brown, Boston, Mass.)

It was in the summer of 1893 in Wheeling, West Virginia. I was asked to go for a ride in a pony cart. We were riding along when the pony became scared at an engine that was coming up the track. He started off and ran down the street. When we got down the street a little farther the cart upset and I was thrown out. There was a man and girl with me. When I was thrown out I struck the pavement on my head. I was taken into a house, my head bleeding terribly. The blood was washed off and I was taken home in a carriage. When I got home it was found that my collarbone was broken and one of my legs sprained and cuts all over me. I carried my arm in a sling for months afterward. But I got well so that I could use it again.

### In a Runaway Car.

(By Algernon Clark, New York.)

It was on a hot afternoon in sunny July, just before the three forty-five express train was due, that I thought I would like to see how the brakes on a coal car work.

I went over to the coal shed and saw an empty coal car standing on a slanting trestle running up to a height of twenty feet. I got in this empty car and turned off the brakes, and she started down hill at a terrific rate of speed. The switch at the lower end of the grade was open and the car, with me trying to stop it, ran right on to the main track just as the express came along and would have crashed into my car had not a friend of mine signaled the engineer of the express to stop. When it did stop my car was three feet away from the locomotive of the express. Then I got out of my car and had this friend of mine drive ten miles to my home in the mountains. I have seen all I care to see about air brakes or any other brakes.

### A Wheelman's Story.

(By George Nordlin, St. Paul, Minn.)

Two or three years ago I spent much of my time riding a wheel. In all my experience as a wheelman I have had the good fortune to have only one narrow escape from injury in an accident; but I have certainly never wished for a repetition of it.

One day as I was returning home late in the afternoon I turned into a narrow street, intending thereby to shorten the distance materially. I was riding rather slowly, for I was tired, having just finished a long spin down to the river. Drivers with their teams were returning home, their day's work over, and I had to turn aside for more than one of them.

As I reached the middle of the block a large wagon came along directly in my path, and so close to the curb that I must necessarily turn to the left to get out of its way.

I steered out toward the center of the street and was very much surprised to see a second wagon come up from behind the other and run up alongside right in my way.

The street was narrow, as I have said, and the two teams blocked it up. For a second I was in doubt as to what I should do; something made me turn my head to look back over the part of the street I had just passed.

Ye gods! A heavy wagon was coming from that direction, too, and I was midway between the two teams! The latter would collide, and I—— The bare thought made cold sweat come to my forehead.

The drivers of both teams appeared to be trying to stop their horses, but they were now almost upon me. I headed my wheel straight for the sidewalk and pedaled away. It seemed an age! I could feel the horses' warm breath and their—— Just then my front tire struck the curb and I threw myself and wheel forward on the stone sidewalk just as the two teams came together right behind me!

Everything seemed in a whirl for a few seconds, but I was conscious of the fact that I had been saved from horrible injury, perhaps death.

As I sat up I saw the drivers yelling and trying to back their teams. Luckily, the horses had escaped with a few bruises after bumping together with considerable force.

I scrambled to my feet, and to my surprise and delight found both the wheel and myself to be uninjured.

I was shaken up, my clothes torn, and considerably bruised, it is true, but, nevertheless, I thought I had come out of it all in pretty good shape.

I brushed off my clothes and rubbed a couple of sore spots. Then I mounted my wheel and rode home, thankful to Providence for my narrow escape.

### Crippled for Life.

(By Arthur Fausnacht.)

One day two boys and I made up our minds to run away, so we met at the school house and went to the railroad and boarded a freight. We were riding along for about ten miles when I began to dance around on the top of a box car. I danced too near the edge when I lost my balance. The freight was small and we were going pretty fast. I fell down and the suction drew both my legs under the car, and cut both my legs off above the knees. I was knocked unconscious.

An hour later the track walker came along and found me. I had my address in a notebook which I carried. He sent me to the hospital, where they fixed me up all right. I go to school in a little carriage, which I propel with my hands.

### An Experience with a Raccoon.

(By Albert Kellogg, Providence, R. I.)

In the fall of 1900 I was invited by my friend, David Brown, to spend my Thanksgiving vacation at his house.

The second night after I was at his house, Dave asked me to go raccoon hunting with him that night, so about eight o'clock we started, each of us armed with a heavy club and accompanied by a mongrel dog, called Jack. After traveling about two hours we heard the dog barking about a quarter of a mile away. We ran, or rather stumbled, along until we could dimly see, by the light of the moon, a small open space ahead and in this space stood a slender maple tree. At the foot of this tree sat the dog barking furiously.

Looking up, we could see a large black object about half way out and wedged in a fork of the tree. I ran to the tree and began shaking it with all my might. The first thing I knew I heard limbs breaking in all directions, and before I could jump out of the way Mr. Coonie came tumbling down on my head and knocked me down.

Jack jumped in and we three went rolling on the ground together.

Instead of trying to run away, the coon seemed to want to stay and fight it out. He snarled and growled and bit me twice in the leg.

At last he got hold of my wrist and would not let go. I was pretty well frightened.

"Kill him," I yelled. "Take him away."

About this time Mr. Coonie thought he would make a break for liberty, so he dashed across the space and out of sight with the dog at his heels. Dave followed and told me to come as



soon as I could. I lay on my back several minutes trying to recollect where I was.

When I got up I found I could not move my wrist and my face was covered with blood. I started to go in the direction I heard the dog barking, and met Dave coming back. He said the coon had gone into a ledge, and that it was impossible to get him out.

I went to the nearest doctor, who was three miles away, and had the broken bone in my wrist set. He also put some courtplaster on my face, and I then drove home in his buggy. That night I got all the coon hunting I ever want to see.

### A Close Call.

(By F. A. Morville, Marquette, Mich.)

I was was working for a farmer, and I was sent to town with a load of cabbage for a storekeeper. I got there all right; I unloaded and started back home on a lively gait. I was going across a railroad crossing when a long string of cars came down upon me before I knew it. I said "Whoa!" to the horse, but instead of stopping he was forging ahead.

I kept pulling on the reins and saying "Whoa!"

He wouldn't stop. The noise of the cars drowned my voice. The horse bumped his nose on the cars and then he stopped. The cars passed and I started him again.

I failed to notice another train coming down. It was right upon me before I knew it. The flagman tried to stop me. I didn't know what he wanted until the train crashed into the wagon and I was thrown out, my head striking against a post. I knew no more.

When I came to I was in bed. If I had been one more minute on the crossing it would have meant my death. I tell you it was a close call for me. I wouldn't like to go through it again for anything.

### The Adventures of an Afternoon.

(By Albert Redmond, Harrisburg, Pa.)

In July last, a few friends and myself went swimming in the afternoon. While some of us were swimming around one of the boys said:

"Let's float down to Mother."

Mother is a large rock directly in the course of the current of the Susquehanna River. This rock is about three hundred yards down the river from where we were. We had let the boat drift down stream as the other boys dove from it. I could not swim so I sat looking on.

One of the larger boys said that the water was not up to my neck, and I thought the same, so in I went. To my surprise, it was over my head and hands, so I struck out, as I had seen the other boys do, and thus I kept afloat, until one of the boys in the boat came and got me in the boat.

After that happened we began to dress to go home. At length we started for home clean and refreshed, but as bad luck would have it, we were not to get home without another adventure. When we were half way home the boy rowing broke the oar on a rock. We were all so frightened we sat and looked as if we were struck dumb. I was the first to come to my senses.

I pulled off my shoes and stockings, rolled up my sleeve, and began paddling with my hand and foot. The rest all followed my example. We landed about three squares further down than we intended. We were thankful to get off so easy and thanked God for our lives.

### Lost in the Woods.

(By Pinckney R. Galbreath, New Orleans, La.)

Last summer, in August, I was visiting my grandmother, who lives on a large plantation twenty-five miles from the railroad. I had never been to the country before, and of course I did not know much about the woods. I wanted to ride on one of the horses, and my aunt told me I could ride on hers if I would get him. So I said I would. I took the bridle and went to the pasture for him. There were lots of trees growing in the pasture, and I went down into the woods little thinking

about getting lost. I caught the horse and was leading him out as I thought, when a barb wire fence loomed up before me. I knew that I had not come in through a barbed wire fence because there wasn't one around the pasture, so I led the horse around for a while until I saw that I was lost, so I let him go. I got through the fence and went on a little while, and I came to a wooden fence. I climbed over that one and I found myself in a cotton field. I crossed that and came to another wooden fence. I crossed that one and I found myself in a cornfield, and far away I saw a house. I made for the house because I knew I could never get home unless somebody would take me, and I didn't like the idea of staying in the woods all night. I crossed the cornfield and at last I reached the house. As I went in the back way two big hounds jumped at me. I still had the bridle, and I knocked them away and a colored woman came to the door and asked me what I wanted. I told her that I was lost, and asked her if she would take me home.

She called her boy and he brought me home. My aunt said if I had got on the horse he would have brought me out of the woods all right. It turned out that the house I went to belonged to one of the men my uncle had hired and a good friend of mine. But you can bet I never did go after any other horse unless my uncle went with me.

### Caught in a Whirlpool.

(By John J. Brady, Jr., New York.)

One day last June a friend of mine named Harry Smith proposed that I should take a ride with him in his canoe. It was a pleasant day, and the prospect of a day's outing on the river was delightful, so I accepted his invitation with readiness.

The canoe was kept in a small boathouse down near the naphtha launch works on the Harlem River. Harry had to deliver a message for his father. The message was to go to his uncle, who lived about a mile and a half up the river, near Spuyten Duyvil Creek. While Harry was delivering his message I was paddling leisurely along the creek, when, to my horror the canoe began to circle round the water with lightning speed. I was instantly thrown out, but I grabbed the canoe, noticing that I was being drawn toward the center of the pool.

I thought of all the people who had been drowned in the same pool, and of my mother, who never dreamed that I would be foolish enough to go near that dreaded place. In fact, I had closed my eyes and was waiting for the last, when I was clutched by strong hands, and knew no more.

I afterward found out from Harry Smith that I had been picked up by a deckhand on board the tug boat named Three Brothers.

Ah! fellows, every time I recall that thrilling incident it makes my blood run cold.

### Blown Up.

(By Russell Froelick, Harrisburg, Pa.)

It was the Fourth of July, and I was up at six o'clock in the morning.

Having bought, the day before, five pounds of powder and a large brass cannon, the powder being in a tight box, I set out to have a day's sport.

Meeting two other boys whom I knew, we three went down to the river near the shore, and seating ourselves on an up-turned boat we loaded the cannon, shooting it several times. The heavy reports soon had five or six other boys there.

After loading the cannon the last time I had forgotten to close the lid of the box. One of the boys threw a fire cracker, which was lit, in the direction of the box, and when it was just about a foot away it exploded, a piece of burning paper fell in the box, and then—

Boo—o—m!

I felt myself being lifted off of my feet and when I got up again I found myself about twenty feet away from the boat, but still on land. I arose and feeling a heat in my face, I chanced to look down and then I saw that my clothes were afire.

I tried to beat the flames out with my hands, but found that they were horribly burned.



Just then I heard somebody call out, "Jump into the river."

So, away I went, the wind fanning my flaming clothes, burning them through in several places. I dived into the water as quickly as I could and as soon as I struck the water a cloud of steam arose from it, looking as though the flames were very angry at having to give up their victim, but I was not the only one. My two friends, "Nigger" and "Eggie" (their right names being William Snamely and Edward Griffey) were in the same fix.

I dragged myself out as best I could and looked at myself and found that I was fearfully burned about the head and limbs. I was taken home and kept to my bed for nearly a month. I am now as well as ever.

### In a Cistern.

(By George Sherod, Iowa.)

One day my grandma was having a new floor put in her kitchen and I was running across the floor and over a board that lay over the cistern. The board broke and I went in. When I came up they tried to get me up, but I sank again. My grandma put a ladder down, and she came down the ladder and caught me by the collar as I came up the third time. I have always thought how lucky I was not to get drowned.

### Saved from a Watery Grave.

(By William Cruse, Philadelphia.)

I and a couple of comrades were playing baseball in Fairmount Park, and in coming home we were passing a pond. We sat down on the edge, and a boy passing accidentally pushed me in and I could not swim, nor could my comrades, as they were only small boys like myself. I was going down for the third time when one of the big boys who had just got done playing baseball and was going home, too, jumped in and rescued me. I was so badly frightened that I never went to that place again.

### My Narrowest Escape.

(By Henry Kussmaul, Boston, Mass.)

One night in the middle of October the year 1900 I was coming home from work on a passenger train from Boston. As the train pulled out of the South Union station I was standing on the rear platform.

The train drew out some hundred yards or more and suddenly stopped on account of a danger signal ahead, and as it did so I got off onto the next track to see what was the matter.

I was there a few moments when I heard a sharp whistle behind me and turning around I saw a train coming on the same track toward me.

I then jumped to the next track and no sooner did I get there than I saw an inward-bound train coming toward me. Then I got frightened, for every track I jumped upon there was a train coming on. I looked around for a place of safety and saw a small platform on which a signal light was standing and quickly jumped upon it, but not a second too soon, for trains were whizzing by on all sides of me.

When the danger was over a man came running up to where I was standing, thinking I was killed.

On seeing I was safe he gave me a call-down for being so careless, and I told him that it was my own fault, for getting off the train at all. This happened where thirty-three tracks are in a bunch, and trains are running every moment of the day over them.

### A Thrilling Time.

(By Eddie Collett, N. J.)

I was but sixteen years old, and it was in summer. I, having nothing to do, decided to take a trip to Germany on a steamer. I applied to the steamship office for work, and two days later was working on the steamship Deutschland.

We reached Hamburg after seven days of sailing, and I got ashore. Having a lot of money I made as tips I spent some. In the hotel with me as my room mate was a burly sailor who

came off the ship with me. One night while I slept he stole my money, and I was left in a strange country without a cent.

After twelve days of hardship I got work on the steamship Augusta Victoria. We were three days at sea when one night I was standing on deck by the rail. I did not see the dark figure approaching me. It was the thief, who, thinking I would tell the captain, was going to throw me overboard. All at once I felt strong arms grasp me and felt myself going over.

I struggled desperately, but of no use. I felt myself going, and throwing out my hands, grasped a rope hanging on the side, and hung there. For fully ten minutes I hung there, a single slip meaning death. I cried for help till I felt myself slipping by degrees. I was just about to give up when help came and I was rescued by a steward. I got here safely and never saw the man afterward.

### A Hunt in the Mountains.

(By Clark Bishop, Wyoming.)

Last spring we had some nice weather and not much work to do on the ranch, so my father and I thought we would go to the mountains and hunt for deer and elk. We had to go about sixty miles north before we could find many deer or elk. Well, we got there all right and made our camp in a place where there were lots of large pines and near a little mountain stream where the quaking aspen timber was thick.

The second day we were there we killed three deer. I killed one and father the other two. He sent me to camp to get the pack horse to carry them on, and when I got within about fifty yards of camp, I was surprised to see an old bear and two cubs eating sugar out of our mess kit. I tried to get a shot at the old bear, but she saw me and started to run, and so I shot one of the cubs, which was the worst thing I could have done, for the old bear turned and ran right after me. It excited me so that I didn't hit her in the right place to kill her, and she came all the faster, and when she got within ten feet of me she gave a cry and would have sprang right on me if I had not shot her in the heart.

It makes me shudder every time I think of it. My father gave me a good scolding for not shooting the old bear first or letting them go, for he said I might have been killed for my thoughtlessness.

### Nearly Caught in a Machine.

(By Percy Avery, New York.)

I guess the most exciting adventure I ever had was at the time I was a spooler at the Lindenwald Mills in this city.

I had a skein of yarn in my hands all ready to put on the reel. I do not know how it happened, but I do know I nearly had my arm broken. The skein caught onto the axle and wound around my waist and pulled my arm down toward the cogs.

I yelled to one of the boys to throw off the belt, but he did not hear me. I was getting excited, and as I did not know what to do, so I kicked at the belt myself, lost my balance and fell, but my foot hit the belt and threw it off and stopped the machine with my hand within half an inch of the cogs.

### My Ghostly Experience.

(By Charles Hall, St. Louis, Mo.)

One cold, windy night in March several years ago, my chum, Will Gillam, and I were walking up Ninth street, in Little Rock, Ark., when we met our mutual friend, George Delaney, who asked us to spend the night with him. We consented and started for his rooms, which were on the top floor of an old college building, said to be haunted, and right opposite an old graveyard. When we had climbed three flights of stairs and reached his rooms, he told us to make ourselves at home.

Picking up a pitcher, he said he would go and get some cider. When he had gone Will and I drew our chairs up to the table, on which burned a large lamp, and started to play a game of checkers. We were quietly playing when suddenly we heard a loud, unearthly moan, followed by the rattling crash of a chain, and then a loud bang, as if a door had been violently slammed. As we started to our feet in alarm, with a



puff the lamp went out. Then there was a tall scramble between Will and I to find matches to relight the lamp. When it was lit we looked at each other with pale faces and gasped, "What was that?"

Before we could move again came that terrible sound, and again the light went out. We did not stop to relight it, but both broke for the door.

As we opened it that moan, rattle and bang sounded above our heads, and we ran, and fell to the bottom of those three flights of stairs, where we met George just coming in at the street door with the cider.

He looked at us a moment and said, "What on earth is the matter with you fellows?" And when we told him he burst into a loud laugh:

"Come on upstairs and I will show you the ghost," he said.

We followed slowly after him, and went up in the garret, where we found the ghost. It was an open trap door in the roof, with a long chain fastened to the middle of it and hanging down. When the wind blew through the open trap, it made the moaning sound, and also caused the chain to rattle, and the door to slam back against the wall. The same current of air swept down the garret stairs, and through the transom over the door of George's room and blew out the light. Will and I felt foolish over our fright, but we concluded we would have to go home, so we bade George good-night.

### A Cold Plunge.

(By Harry Dersh, Pa.)

It was in the winter of 1900. Rain! rain! Would it ever stop raining? That was the question I asked myself, as I sat at the window watching the Manatawny Creek overflow its banks. Large cakes of ice and large logs and boards were floating down with the swift current caused by the rain.

Half an hour later the rain stopped. I went out in the yard and got a hook and a wash line. Then I went over next door and got three friends to go along, and try to catch the logs and boards that were floating down the creek.

So we started for the bridge that spans the creek a half a square below our home. Two of the boys had the same kind of hooks that I did. Will, the youngest, had a long pole with a hook on the end.

We were on the bridge about five minutes when Will got hold of a log that pulled his pole out of his hand into the creek.

Then we all ran down below the bridge and tried to catch it. As it was several yards from shore, I ran down below the rest, and stood on a wharf, that is used for a swimming place in the summer. It is built out over the creek, the water is about ten feet deep straight down from the wharf. I leaned out to catch the pole with my hand, not having my hook with me, as it went by, when I overbalanced myself and fell headlong into the creek.

The other boys saw me fall and came running to my aid, but all knowing I was a good swimmer, were not very much afraid of my being drowned. I tried to catch hold of the edge of the wharf, but just as I had hold, a large cake of ice hit me on the head, and stunned me, but only for an instant. But in that instant it had knocked my hold loose, and was forcing me down to the dam not one hundred yards below. Now we were all frightened, for if I went over the dam I would surely be killed or drowned. I tried to swim to shore and got there at last nearly played out. My friends caught hold of my hands and dragged me on shore.

I rested a few minutes and then we started for home, where I could change my clothes. When I had changed we walked along the bank and found the pole lodged against a tree, so Will got his pole again. But I wouldn't go through my adventure again for a hundred poles.

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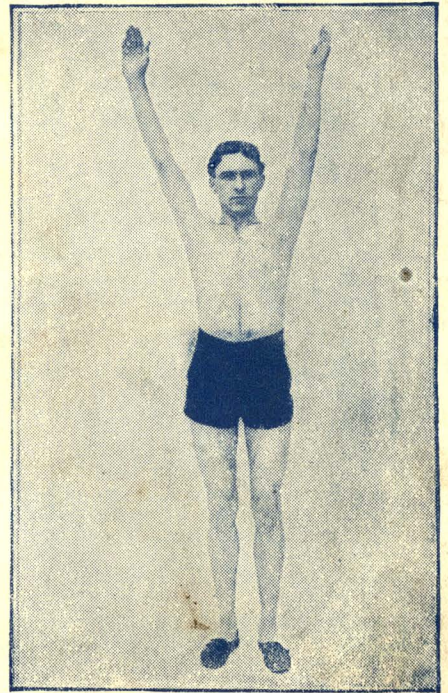
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